

**“Worship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”**  
**-Rev. Joseph Hughes**

**(Note: The first edition of this position paper was mailed and received by David Slayton in early 2012. Following the Biblical Scripture about going to your Brother privately, I had a follow-up discussion with him; but he was unresponsive.)**

FORWORD

The things you will find on this webpage are indeed shocking and I shall be sorry if certain opinions expressed in the following paragraphs appear to any reader, and especially any still attending current members, whom I have known for some time, to be harsh; but I make absolutely no apology and shall comfort myself with the reflection that every word was written in an earnest endeavor to check what I believe to be a real evil and to promote a deeper interest in the true worship of God.

The Bible commands that a Christian should and has an obligation, to confront heresy and not stay silent.

On this webpage, "Worship and Heretical Teaching in the 21st Century at South Norfolk Baptist," you will be introduced to some of the worldliness that has been imported into this church. You will see examples of trying to be "relevant" to the culture....trying to do anything in order to "grow" a church with "numbers" without substance; with examples of a pastor and "guest" pastors, who preach pabulum....little "talks" that have no Biblical substance... that are Eisegetical nonsense. Often they include biblical references that center in on a word or two taken out of context, and have nothing in common with the original meaning in the text.

Listening to these sermons online is revealing, especially how the pastor rips a verse of scripture out-of-context (i.e., changing the meaning), then attempts to apply it to an individual's life (usually his own); which is especially revealing, when that verse means nothing of the kind, and has been misinterpreted, for a congregation, that is none the wiser. Lest you think that I am "cherry-picking" one or two sermon here or there, the introduction found in the first PDF file below, titled "Worship in the 21st Century in South Norfolk Baptist Church," details sermon after sermon after sermon, where this is found. I have been

able to sit and listen to a sermon, (take your pick, any date) and tell you how that sermon will unfold.

You will also be introduced to some of the like-minded "Seeker Sensitive/Vision Casting" pastor-friends of "Pastor David," including the current head of the Norfolk Association, who have been invited to speak in the South Norfolk pulpit, without any regard for the sacredness of that "Sacred Reading Desk" and it's importance in the delivery of the true Word of God. Information is included on them, as several members have asked me who they really are. (Comments about them or "Pastor David," are not reflections on them as persons).

"Pastor David" has an agenda, and, although it was not evident to me at first, it will become clear to you, as you delve into the material presented on this, and adjacent webpages. One of his goals has been the reorganization of South Norfolk Baptist Church, so that it is a community resource distribution center, rather than a place where sound Biblical doctrine is taught and proclaimed. What was his model?

He was enamored with the now disgraced "Richmond Outreach Center," (4 'pastors' there, resigned; the senior one was convicted of a felony, and went to jail. The "ROC" was so disgraced, that they had to change the name of their so-called mega-youth 'church'). He took some of the South Norfolk lay leaders to their facility, in order to be indoctrinated in their methods; he has wanted to remake South Norfolk Baptist into their image!

*Let me say again for emphasis, and let there be no mistake about this: he has turned South Norfolk Baptist into a resource distribution center with all the pagan "bells and whistles," rather than a place where Biblical doctrine is taught and proclaimed.*

His "mission" has been to push for unity in the visible church, with his endorsement of men and their heretical theology; who are "Word of Faith" heretics, "Seeker Sensitives" and "Prosperity Gospel" heretics.

He claims that the church exists for non-believers and the people who are not there. He is aggressively anti-doctrinal, as is seen over and over in his sermons that are Biblically tissue-thin in substance. He has claimed that the church is a "Community" of small groups; that the church body "is a

community." He has no visible expectation that people come to church to be fed God's Word. (See the new webpage: "The Church as a Community" Heresy for background on where this idea started).

He has zero accountability to the people in the congregation. But, the people are accountable to him for accomplishing the "vision" that he "casts."

The central purpose of this webpage is to educate those who still attend South Norfolk Baptist Church, and as a warning to other Christians as to what can happen/how it can happen, in their own church. And so, to those who still attend, but have remained silent, I would encourage you to find your voice, and oppose what you know to be heretical and incorrect teaching. I would encourage you to prayerfully consider the information presented here; not only what I have discovered, but also what other pastors and seminary leaders are saying, as presented in some of the films of Seminary Presidents and Pastors, on this webpage.

This webpage should also serve as a warning to church Pulpit/Pastor-Search Committees who are quick to "jump" in securing anyone as pastor of their church; especially those who have not been thoroughly theologically vetted.....especially they should be cautious of those individuals who make application on their own behalf. They should be extremely cautious of any pastor who would "Case a church" like a burglar, i.e., looking for budgets and other pertinent church governance materials left on hall tables in the church. David Slayton has publically admitted to doing this; in fact, he has admitted that he "perfected" this *modus operandi*.

A Pastor-Search Committee should secure recommendations from other knowledgeable pastors and church leaders in the state who are familiar with the correct method of "calling" a pastor. For instance, some years ago, there was an individual in the "conservative" off-brand/non-SBC group which Slayton belongs to (discussed in the Introductory Pdf), who would send resumes sans recommendations to church pastor search committees, whom he saw in the Religious Herald state Baptist paper; churches that were looking for pastors. He would include references from others who also belonged to this non-Southern Baptist group. Often committees would fall for this, without checking the background of the individual(s) sending these resumes out. Unethical? Yes.

How unfortunate it is that the Protestant landscape is dotted with pastors who act as though they are the heads of their churches. Their mutiny against the true Head of the church is seen most clearly in their deliberate de-emphasis of His Word among their congregations. By sidelining the Scriptures, they are, in essence, silencing the voice of God in the church. After all, to take the Bible out of the church is to revolt against the church's one rightful Head. Conversely, to bring the Word of Christ to His people is to facilitate and exalt the Headship of Christ over His church.

Individual churches are tasked as a whole to baptize and disciple. Look at the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20: notice the words "...teaching them all that I have commanded you..." if Christ hasn't taught it, if it's not verified in Scripture, then it's not to be taught in church. "baptizing and teaching all that I have..." right? So if Jesus didn't teach it, why are heretical ideas being taught in South Norfolk Baptist?

### **Introduction**

After 16 ½ years as Pastor of Baptist churches in Virginia, and 23 ½ years as a U.S. Army Chaplain, I have noticed the changing taste, tone, expectations, and increasingly lack of reverence for God, in the act of worship. I believe that several areas need to be addressed when thinking about the current "Worship Wars" going on in our Protestant denominations, i.e., what is frequently referred to as "Traditional" vs. "Contemporary" Worship.

I was brought up in a Christian home; a home where the Bible was read every morning, and prayers said by each member of the family. And I distinctly remember the spiritually uplifting worship services at South Norfolk Baptist Church (SNBC) where my father was pastor, with the Evening Worship Service broadcast live on FM radio for many years. The services were accompanied by a pipe organ (one organist, Gwen Whitehurst, served over 25 years); and a Baldwin baby grand piano (Betty LeBlanc, pianist). Worship music was always inspiring, with use of the Baptist Hymnal. Revivals were held annually. The Lord blessed the work with Sunday School and Worship attendance averaging over 500 a week. (The auditorium utilizing all four of the side classrooms would seat 500).

## **Contemporary vs. Traditional**

So, what is all the current brouhaha about “Contemporary” vs. “Traditional?” The statement, “We can use any contemporary music style in our praise and worship services, and God will accept it,” sums up the philosophy of the Contemporary P&W (Praise and Worship) movement. Such philosophy is a lie. It comes directly out of a teaching that is popular in contemporary churches: “God accepts us as we are.” But there is no biblical proof that God accepts anyone for “who he is.” God is not interested in our self-esteem. Jesus told the woman at the well, caught in adultery, “Go and sin no more.” Jesus expects us to “sin no more;” to show a change in our affections from idols to Him, and for us to turn from the lusts of the world, and love Him. To say, “we can come to God just as we are, and remain as we are, drag in our favorite worldly music tunes that are dressed up with so-called Christian words that repeat themselves ad nauseam; dress, and language into the church, and expect a blessing,” is off the mark. I contend that the wholesale embracing of CCM (Contemporary Church Music) by many in church leadership is a direct consequence of our failure to confront and refute “acceptance” teaching.

Perhaps many want to avoid being labeled as “legalists.” But they have traded biblical discernment for toleration of all forms of worldliness; so why should it come as any surprise that “anything goes” with music in the church? It all goes back to that big lie that “God accepts me as I am; therefore, He accepts my music.” Acceptance of CCM (Contemporary Christian Music) into worship services has hurt an entire generation of older Christians, has led to church splits, and has created a breeding ground for immorality, selfishness, and divisive attitudes in younger generations. And in the meantime, the church sinks into a morass of relativism.

## **What we Wear to Worship**

What is the *naked truth* about clothes in worship? Folks can become too casual, too indiscreet or too revealing in our manner of dress when we gather for worship. I saw this happen at a chapel service I was conducting for young soldiers, who were allowed to come out-of-uniform in civilian clothes, and had to put an end to the revealing dress of some in the choir. The way we dress should be in keeping with or fitting with the occasion.

I have never observed a person wearing flip-flops, jeans or shorts or other like clothing at the funerals or weddings I have conducted. But I've heard some say, "Well, it does not matter how you dress when you go to church." Of course, we understand the terminology, even though it is incorrect. We do not "go to church." "Church" is something that you were added to, if you are saved. (Acts 2:47). We attend the assemblies of the church. (Hebrews 10:25). *But*, is your attitude toward God what it should be? Our actions are a direct reflection of our attitudes. How we dress and conduct ourselves either shows reverence, awe love, faith, and trust toward God, or a lack thereof. We demonstrate our reverence by our actions. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22).

Let us recognize the need for modesty and reverence (Genesis 3:6-11), understand that we are in a battle against worldliness (Romans 12:2), live as unattached from the world (1 John 2:15-17), and dress with a God-centered hope in mind. These changes are part of a broad shift toward the convenient and comfortable. It's a shift we see on display every week in many church worship services, where casual wear is *de rigueur*. Jeans, shorts, tee shirts, tank tops, flip-flops or sandals: these draw scarcely any attention, while full dresses or a suit and tie appear strangely out of place. Relaxed, even ruffled informality is in; suiting up in our "Sunday best" is out. The question I want to raise here is what should we make of this shift in worship attire? What is really going on here?

We deceive ourselves when we breezily claim that God does not care what we wear to church. God cares about our hearts, and what we wear is often an expression of our hearts. So what does our relaxed worship attire say about us?

A bride would be insulted if we cared so little as to show up for her lovely wedding in cut-offs and sneakers. Instead, we "dress up" for her wedding to express our regard for her and the significance of the event. What, then, are we saying when we see no need to treat our corporate worship with similar or even greater regard? A casually dressed pastor, staff, and choir, lead to casual church members, with a casual approach to, and regard for, God.

"Give unto the LORD the glory due his name," says the psalmist; "worship the LORD in the beauty of his holiness" (Ps. 29:2). Surely the "holiness" of our public worship should influence how we dress for the occasion. There is nothing remotely "casual" about the worship, taking place in heaven, where appropriate clothing seems to matter (Rev. 7:9-12). What do we reveal when we dress no

differently for church than we do for a trip to the mall or hanging out with friends around a barbeque grill? Could it be that our casual dress, chosen merely for our own comfort and convenience (that which "cost me nothing"), is a reflection of an equally casual, can't-be-bothered ("what a nuisance this is!") attitude toward worship itself?

Like it or not, those around us are constantly "*reading*" our appearance. Our clothing choices bear inevitable social and biblical implications; it is our visual testimony. One pastor I saw, not so long ago, in a restaurant, dressed in sloppy, casual clothes, "*sent*" the wrong message to the unsaved. "Let each of you look not only to his own interests," says the apostle Paul, "but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3–4, ESV).

I still remember the young woman who came to a Wednesday night Prayer Service at South Norfolk, to audition for the position of church pianist in the 1970's. She wore "hot pants." Needless to say, that was her one and only time to play in SNBC.

The church must first shape its worship to honor God, a goal to which all else must be subordinate. But thankfully, watching believers do what they do can have its own evangelistic effect. When Christians are worshiping as they should, says the apostle Paul, and "and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you" (1 Cor. 14:24–25). Attire that genuinely reflects a God-honoring attitude toward worship may well contribute to a similar result.

The scriptures are a warning that the glib assumption that "God does not care about what we wear to church" or "what I choose to wear for worship doesn't matter" or "how I dress for church is a purely personal affair" or "my own convenience and comfort are all that need concern me." The reality is, one of the ways we express ourselves as human beings is by the way we dress. Wittingly or unwittingly, our clothing gives us away. God certainly does not need this expression to know our hearts. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." Except for [certain Anglicans](#), I'm sure most of us would agree that clown suits are generally inappropriate attire for church.

## “User Friendly” Music

“We are trying to reach the un-churched,” is a common excuse used for bringing “CCM” (Contemporary Church Music) into the worship service. Using CCM is a smoke screen obscuring the real reason: the “worship leader” (hand-picked by the pastor) and his “praise team” simply want to use *their music* in the church which has the same self-centered, self-indulgent spirit of the 1960s and 70s, but it has been given a veneer of Christian dedication. The rush to make the church “user friendly,” has become an excuse for installing worldly amusements into the church, in an attempt to attract non-Christian “seekers” by appealing to their fleshly interests by use of guitar, drums, and other worldly musical instruments, (not to mention that they offer *a pool table in the Educational Building, and secular dancing lessons are on the church calendar*). As I heard Dr. R.G. Lee once say, “People there are, not a few, who have pipe organ abilities and make no more music for the causes of Christ than a wheezy saxophone in an idiot's hands.”

The obvious fallout of this is a pre-occupation with the un-churched and a corresponding de-emphasis on those who are the true church. The spiritual needs of believers are neglected to the hurt of the body. And when the leadership, (i.e., Pastor) has been approached, and does not listen to the median and senior adults whose offerings represent the majority of church ministry income, well, what then?

Dr. Al Mohler, Jr., President of Southern Baptist Seminary wrote: “The ubiquitous culture of consumerism and materialism has seduced many evangelicals into a ministry mode driven by *marketing* rather than *mission*. To an ever-greater extent, evangelicals are accommodating themselves to moral compromise in the name of lifestyle and choice. Authentic biblical worship is often supplanted by the entertainment culture, as issues of performance and taste displace the simplicity and God-centeredness of true worship. Our churches are worldly in lifestyle, worship, and piety. We have seen the worship of God too often made into a human-centered entertainment event.”

And then, what are the so-called “7-11 Hymns” used in worship? The phrase refers to 7 words sung over and over again 11 times...in mindless fashion, projected onto a movie screen, often lacking any spiritually edifying content, for those who have come to “worship.” It is “Christianity Lite,” a sort of dumbing down of true worship.



## **What I have personally observed in other Southern Baptist Churches**

I visited one large theater-style Baptist Church in Texas, which had removed all the hymnals from the pew racks, and relies on theater-style screens with video projection. (I say theater-style, because with my background in stage light design while in college, this is exactly how this church auditorium has been built, with all Luminaire Types, including: Plano Convex, Ellipsoidal Reflector, Fresnel, Par64, Par Pin Spot, Beam projectors, Floodlights, Strip lights, Projectors, and Automated fixtures). Baptist hymns, with their long heritage of theology that inspires, informs, and provides a mode of expressing one's personal feelings in a relationship with God, as well as simple worship, are missing in that church.

I came away thinking, have I seen the future of the church? The hymns (8-10-worded songs really), anthems, everything had been jettisoned. As people were singing, praising some vague thing called 'God' who, as far as I could tell, had never done anything in particular; as we were bouncing along praising, I wanted to say, "you know there are people out there today who just found out that their cancer is not responding to treatment, or who found out their kids won't do right, that their marriage won't survive, or that they can't keep their jobs; and here we are, just bouncing along, grinning, praising God. We've got some good stuff for that kind of thing...where is it?"

### **From "Sanctuary" to "Theater"**

In this large "theater-style" Southern Baptist church in Texas, where there was applause after every part of the service, and where the congregation remained almost silent during the singing (because they were not familiar with the words/music), not only through many of the "7-11 hymns," but when the music director led in the singing of an invitation hymn, of the "7-11" variety, projected on two large screens. The same 8-10 words were sung over, and over, and over. Not many, except the choir, knew the tune or words, and it literally "killed" the invitation...no one responded to the altar call. With no benediction, the pastor simply dismissed the congregation with, "I'll remain at the front and talk with anyone who would like to come forward; you 'all are dismissed."

I returned three years later, to visit in this same Texas church, (I am not a member there), and heard the pastor, who had just returned from a pastor's renewal retreat, very humbly say, and I quote: "Pastors are looking for gimmicks to get people in the church. Contemporary Music...that's hogwash....love one another is Jesus growth strategy for the church. I have come to believe that all the perfunctory

things we have done here, is all performance...people shaking hands...it is all performance...and we need to return to the old time hymns that speak to people's hearts." *Here is a pastor who has pastored this church for eight years, with no revival services, and with the use of Contemporary Music, and with the membership at stagnation level, say that he wants his church return to those things that matter in worship!* (But when I was invited back to visit that church a year later, they had reverted back to the "7-11 hymns" even for the "invitation hymn" which consisted of no more than 8-10 words sung over and over; and the results were the same: it "killed" the spirit of the invitation and no one responded.) (I understand now, still another year later, the pastor has decided to return with *three services*: one traditional, one contemporary, and one "blended"... and the hymnals have been returned to the pew racks, and he is preaching sermons that are biblically based).

It is so unfortunate that Contemporary music and worship, has become worship dumbed down; a cross between "American Idol" and "Sesame Street." And what the concoctors of "seeker services" say, that seekers seek, are "answers." It's "Christianity Lite."

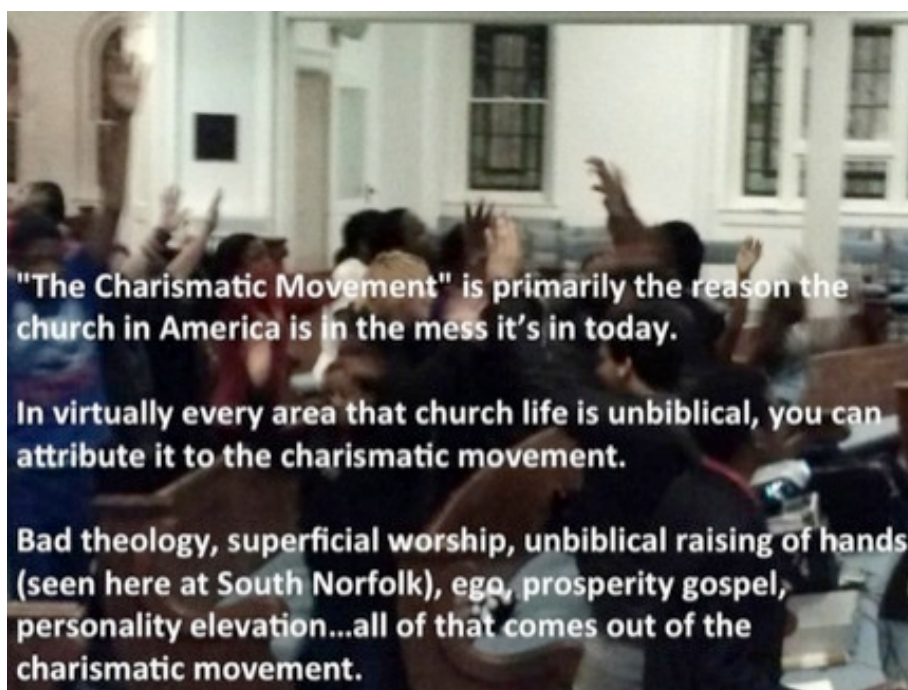
### **Charismatic Style: "Let's all raise our hands"**

And what is all this raising of hands I've observed in worship services at South Norfolk Baptist? Raising hands, although referenced in the Psalms and one place in the New Testament, *is not sanctioned in the Bible*, because those references have nothing to do with corporate worship. Charismatic teachers and preachers have lifted Bible verses out of context. And the current pastor at South Norfolk is encouraging the unbiblical raising of hands during the services.

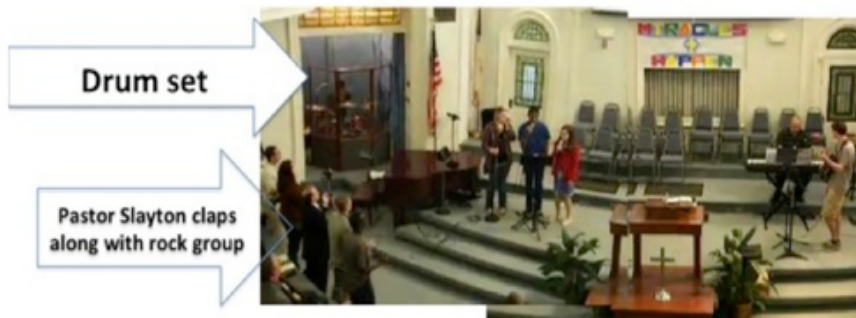
When Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:8, commands Christians to pray 'lifting up holy hands,' he undoubtedly means this figuratively. To offer clean hands to God in a literal way, like little children showing parents that they have washed before a meal, would be a preposterous thing to do. The hands represent our deeds, and Paul means that we should strive for holiness before we pray. Consider Psalm 24:3-4, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." Rising of hands is just another example of a charismatic activity based on flimsy, if not the ridiculous misuse, of Bible texts.

The raising hands in a worship service, is an unbiblical charismatic human device, intended, consciously or unconsciously, to help people to get into a mildly

trance-like, mystical state of worked-up emotions. It is done in defiance of the 'spirit and truth' principle, so that far from helping worship, it diverts the mind down a road of self-indulgent emotionalism. Many sincere believers have been misled into taking up this practice, not only in the congregation, but in the choir loft as well, as helpful to a sense of communion; but in reality, it is a hindrance, because it encourages emotions at a human, rather than a spiritual level.



**Youth rock group performs at Sunday Morning Service**  
 With "Miracles Happen" theme poster.  
 (More "Name it/Claim it" false theology?)





## The “Vision” Slayton “Cast” for 2015: “In Christ”

### Applause for the Performers

And then, why is Applause the norm in some churches, and becoming more prevalent at South Norfolk, after every solo, choir anthem, offertory, *even after a prayer?* This has turned worship into a performance; the audience becoming observers, as in a theater or arena, (as I saw at the South Norfolk Baptist Christmas Eve service, December 2010, in which every part of the service, except the sermon, was greeted with applause, *including the reading of the Scripture! It was one of the most irreverent services I’ve ever attended there*).

### Putting Worship into a Blender

What about the so-called "blended" worship style (using both traditional hymns and those of the “7-11” variety), which was tried in some churches, unsuccessfully? Churches most likely to have worship-related problems, are those that utilize "blended" music, which is a questionable attempt to please everyone at once. It appears that the use of blended music merely reminds people of the fact that they have to share the music space with others who cannot tolerate their own preferences, just as they cannot tolerate those of others. The reliance on blended music seems to actually fuel rather than dampen the fires of discord. Recent studies conducted show that people are less likely to feel connected to God in a blended service than in one that uses a single style of music.

It is worth noting in this regard, that too many churches, trying to be modernistic and contemporary to attract new members, frequently employ five popular models that involve much secular idolatry. These Evangelicals tend to reduce the throne room experience of worship to: a classroom for learning, a family reunion for mutual encouragement, a welcome wagon for visitors and seekers, a therapist's couch for psychological healing, or a variety show for entertainment.

Many church people “fight” about music because they have yet to understand *the purpose* of music in the worship process. This lack of insight, causes them to focus on and fight for their preferred sound, instruments, presentation techniques, or their desired order of service. Too often, church leaders and pastors get caught up in the fuss. Some pastors become leaders of a certain faction, taking sides, advocating use of worldly musical instruments, without thoroughly searching the scripture, to see what God in His Word, says about it. The end result is often a falling away of middle age and older adults; many who have been in the church for years, but are discouraged by the circus atmosphere, in what is pawned off as the Worship of God.

These worship “battles” are inappropriate distractions from meaningful ministry and fruitful discipleship by pastor and people. Christians need to be more zealous about, and devoted to worshipping God. The Church needs to move on and focus on the *One* worthy of worship, and the desire of His heart, rather than to focus on the tools used to facilitate our expressions of love and gratitude.

### **Turning Worship upside down**

I visited South Norfolk Baptist Church a few years ago, and left the nearly two-hour “worship” service in shock. The new pastor (2008), had invited a Liberty University musical group, (where he had attended), to the service. After the preliminary “7-11 hymns,” and what I call “aerobics in the aisles” (where, for 5-10 minutes, the congregation and choir comingled with each other; glad-handing, hugging, and welcoming one another to the service, irrespective of the influenza that was going around); the guest youth music group, with a portable sound-stage system, acoustic/electric guitars, keyboard, and drums, took over. It was a sort of mixture of religion and buffoonery, the spicy aroma of the dance hall, and the vulgar antics of the circus clown.

The noise was ear splitting; but what was worse, they did little dances, twirling around, and encouraged the congregation to do the same (they had previously met with the church youth, and taught them the twists and turns); twirling around in their old clothes: t-shirts, jeans with holes, halter tops, and worse. One long-time member of the church, sitting in the audience, looked over and saw me present, later told me, “This was not the Sunday for you to have come. I’m sorry you had to see that.” Several members got up and left; two moved their membership elsewhere. (He had been a deacon; she a Sunday School teacher. Both had been faithful for dozens of years.) But this is what happens when a pastor,

deacons, or an un-trained "worship leader" ("Contemporary Christian Music" terminology), condone this new music style. *It does matter* that worship is *not to be turned into entertainment*. Certainly Hip-hop music doesn't belong in a Vacation Bible School program, introduced as it was, at South Norfolk, in 2013.

Such irreverent "worship" makes me feel disconnected from 2,000 years of worship history. And just when I think that maybe it's just me having a selfish and sinful attitude — a very real possibility — a flamboyant electrical guitar solo breaks out. I'm left deciding whether to waive my iPhone and buy the t-shirt, or just shut up and go home. What is wrong with these "7-11" simpleton hymns: First, they're really, really, simplistic. Second, they seem pulled from the Top 40 Worship Channel. Oh, I know, every so often you toss a token "hymn" (meaning within just the last century or so) into the mix. But even then, it's a remix that requires melodic jujitsu, to keep up with the quicker pace and fancier chord progressions. One distinguishing mark of the worship music of centuries past is that it generally focused more on content than today's simplistic style. Hymns like "Come, Thou Almighty King"; "Immortal, Invisible"; "Rejoice, the Lord is King"; or even the simple "I Sing the Almighty Power of God" typified a depth of doctrine that taught us as it revealed the glory of our Lord. Third problem: they repeat, and repeat, and repeat, and repeat. By the fifth time, I was hearing echoes of Jesus warning about vain repetitions.

Let me pass on to you what Bill Blankschaen suggested:

**"So here's what I'd like songs in church to be:**

1. **Truthful.** Rather than trying to get dumber than a fifth-grader in the worship service (no offense to my fifth-grade daughter), offer truth that grows my understanding of God as we glorify him. He is truth, after all, so it shouldn't be that difficult.
2. **Written for adults.** We're not camp attendees giddy about it being our first time away from home. Well, maybe some of us are — but the rest of us don't always want to have to choose between clapping our hands in rhythm with the group or wrestling with the guilt trip you put on us. Go ahead. Give us songs with deep doctrine that excite our souls. We're not seekers anymore. Come to think of it, I never was.
3. **Timeless.** Let's sing songs that reach back into the archives of songs proven to have been used by God to edify His people. Mix them in with modern songs, by all means. That's fine. But don't feel as if you have to make them sound like they just hit the airwaves last week. Imagine Mayberry today on

MTV. Modern? Yes. Watchable? No. Sometimes classic is really cool. Really.

I could mention the need to play the music well, of course, but, frankly, I can live with the best you can give on that one. Make it as excellent as you can, please — just don't make us sing it *ad nauseum* or worship your musical talents instead of our musical God."

I knew that South Norfolk Baptist, was slowly moving to more worldly forms and modes of music, as just a few years prior to the aforementioned, another music director and another pastor had allowed the choir plus others, to perform a secular Christmas musical, complete with girls dressed in skimpy Scottish attire, doing a sword dance; secular dancing on the pulpit platform to secular music. A few choir members, who should have known better, and feeling guilty about what had transpired, tried to later explain it away, saying to me, "Well, it was done in good taste." Good taste? Where? In a secular theater or in a church? It was a *show* not a worship service.

### **Using an *Esoteric* Internet Website for Promoting Ministry**

South Norfolk Baptist, since with the new pastor (2008) had been putting its announcements on a sub-website of the SNBC website, called "**NETMA**" (**Nobody Ever Tells Me Anything**) which has now been, thankfully, discontinued.

Unfortunately, many members of the church do not have Internet or access to a computer, and do not know what has really been going on in the church.

### **Endorsing Heretical Internet Websites**

**South Norfolk Baptist Church (as of November 5, 2014), continued to endorse the following heretical "Emergent" churches, which teach false doctrine, on the official South Norfolk Baptist Church Facebook (damage control resulted it in it's being re-done in 2015, listing it as "Unofficial," and omitting the Heretical websites, after it was noted on this home page, that this**

**website was now also available at  
[www.southnorfolk baptist church.com](http://www.southnorfolk baptist church.com)):**

**"ROC" (Richmond Outreach Center),  
 NewSpring Church (South Carolina),  
 Mars Hill Church (Seattle),  
 New Life Providence Church, (Virginia Beach) (which church also  
 endorses IHOP "International House of Prayer"), and  
 Bethel Church, (Redding, California, which sponsors a "Dead  
 Raising Team" and engages in "Grave Sucking" and "Tattoo  
 Reading"). This South Norfolk Baptist website, had also endorsed  
 "Bethel Music" which is part of Bethel Church.**

**(See the "Emergent Church" page on this website,  
 for more information on the heresies practiced by these so-called  
 "churches").**



**(“Grave Sucking” photo: practiced by Bethel Church, Redding, CA.)**

### **Majoring on Minors**

(“Majoring on Minors” was a phrase I once heard my Grandfather, Rev. J. Leighton Read, D.D., use when speaking about Christian pastors and other folk who became sidetracked from following the Bible in their lives and in their churches.)



I remember reading about preachers of many years ago, inveighing against what they called “the social gospel.” This was a watered down version of Christianity, which avoided talk of sin and salvation, repentance and redemption. The cross and resurrection were studiously avoided to portray a compassionate Jesus who lived among the poor and whose chief ministry was healing the sick, preaching against the rich, criticizing the religious hypocrites. These “social gossellers” or “hot gossellers” were all “liberals” who were forsaking the true message of the gospel in favor of “soup kitchen Christianity.” They were all for giving people bread, but not the bread of heaven. They were all for helping the poor have a better life, but not concerned about eternal life.

The problem with those who promote the social gospel is not that they feed the poor, are activists for justice and are work for healing and reconciliation, but that they put these things before the primary message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the old, old story of a fallen humanity in need of forgiveness and a loving God who sent His own Son to seek and to save that which was lost. Those who follow a social gospel reduce the life and work of Jesus Christ to that of an inspired healer.....a social worker and a pacifist activist. Usually their activism and concern for the poor is linked with a political ideology; a felt-need to reach the disadvantaged, due to one's own background of psychological traumatic neglect as a child; or a desire to make the world a better place, and/or the heresy of universalism i.e. “everybody will be saved by God’s mercy and love so we don’t have to preach repentance and salvation of souls or such a thing as heaven and hell.

The *social gospel* is a heresy, and like every heresy, it is not completely wrong. It is only half right. We are supposed to feed the hungry, house the homeless, heal the sick and work for justice and peace, but this is the fruit of our faith in Christ. It is the result of our redemption, our salvation experience, *not the primary point of our faith*. The first objective is the salvation of our souls, and from this faith in Christ, we are transformed into His likeness, and as we are transformed into His likeness, we begin to do His work in the world. If we jump straight to the good works, then we are guilty of the old heresy of Pelagianism: trying to be good enough under our own steam.

We have seen the capitulation of most Christian groups in the developed world to this agenda already. The mainstream liberal Protestant denominations adopted the social gospel long ago, and are now not much more than a group of peace and justice campaigners who meet on Sunday for strategy sessions. The hip Evangelicals have gone a different, but similar route. Increasingly their message is one of self-help, love your neighbor, prosperity gospel, success strategies, rehab

therapies, good parenting and how to manage your money. The cross of Christ and the need for repentance and redemption is quietly downplayed, diluted, and discarded.

The “Social Gospel” at South Norfolk (what I refer to in "Worship in the 21st Century," as "Social Work Services") has become a mix of.....

- Soup Kitchen Christianity
- Clothes closet, Coats for Kids
- After-school tutoring
- “SHRMP,” off-multi-site emphasis, not in South Norfolk area
- Chesapeake Tigers Football
- Drumline
- “Generations to Come”
- Cheer leading
- Hip-hop
- "Youth Dress for Success"
- “United Youth Football League”
- Pool table
- Secular dance classes, inside the church building
- Hip-Hop *inside the church auditorium, and on the roof of the 3<sup>rd</sup> story Educational Building, during the day AND AT NIGHTTIME!!!!*

**Bible Study? Youth Choir? Prayer Service led by the Pastor? New Member training? Discipleship training? Not much.....except for teaching books written by known Heretics!**

The "*Social Gospel*" methodology being pursued at South Norfolk by the pastor, has led to a Worship of God which has been downgraded to that of entertainment for the un-churched pagan, mixed with a "Prosperity Gospel" of “Name it/Claim it,” that negates expository preaching, and is replaced with eisegesis of the Scripture, a twist of Bonhoeffer, and mixed with Mark Batterson’s theological heretical “Circle Maker” heretical nonsense.

In many churches today, the "Hot Gospeller" has become enamored with trying to be all things to all people; and the Gospel Message of Jesus has taken a backseat. It is a case of "Majoring on Minors."

My wife pointed out to me that on Easter Sunday, 2013, the cover of the Sunday morning bulletin at South Norfolk Baptist Church, where her mother attended, (but has since moved her membership to a more stable, traditional, and *biblically-based {a church that teaches the Bible}* church), featured news about the local football club which the church was sponsoring; there was absolutely nothing about the fact that it was Easter, Resurrection Sunday; and what that meant for believers. Again, it was pandering to the unbeliever; the enticement of the unsaved with the “Purpose Driven” methodology, by promoting a football program. But.... **Worship is not about pleasing the unbeliever; it is about what most pleases God.**

Rev. Slayton’s time is taken up in myriad community social work service activities, unrelated to the church: “SHRMP,” a multi-off-site VBS/recreation program for underprivileged children not in the South Norfolk church community; leading the "Generations to Come" (GTC) board, a locally-developed, non-profit organization founded by himself and another man, that fosters social causes for youth, but has nothing in their published online "mission statement" that connects them to the work of South Norfolk Baptist Church, or the Lord's Work. "Generations To Come" sponsors the "Chesapeake Tigers Football Club," (this group is now affiliated with the "United Youth Football League" (UYFL) a strictly international youth football league, *which has no church affiliation of any kind*; and is a for-profit organization); Cheer leading, Drum line, Baseball, and Wrestling. ***(But what about the Present Generation? What is being done for them?)***

*Almost all of his sermons over the past 2 years include a reference to this Shrmp program; or some related social work. Even in the first sermon for 2015, he devoted 2/3 of his sermon time to defending this social gospel program; he exegeted no scripture text; he engaged in more “Sheep Beating” on the congregation for not fully supporting him and this program; and closed with NO invitation to the lost for repentance, salvation, and confession of sin. It’s like listening to a stuck record. The title was “His Will,” and I’ve got to wonder whose ‘Will’ is he referring to? Certainly not the Lord’s Will. This is a sub-rosa method of “Vision Casting.”*

## Looking for Endorsement from the *Splinter Group*, SBCV (Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia)

The pastor recently brought in [Shawn Ames](#), **a student minister from the SBCV splinter group formed in 1996, and is not associated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia, and which does not support the SBC Cooperative Program**, in an attempt to give credence to his plan of engaging other churches, with his recreation/social outreach programs, which do nothing for adult/young adult outreach or Discipleship Bible Training, in the South Norfolk/Portlock area.

The SBCV is *NOT* part of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, but is a splinter group, founded in 1996, *in opposition* to the Southern Baptist General Association of Virginia. At first, they used the "biblical inerrancy" issue to hide their real purpose. (*The Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Association of Virginia, has always supported the Bible as the inspired Word of God!*) The SBCV gives "lip service" to the Cooperative Program, and has tried to undermine the work and financial support of our Southern Baptists' schools, seminaries, and other institutions; by starting this parallel organization and having churches divert their monetary gifts, to their own organization and agenda.

The SBCV also has a parallel "shadow" program of obtaining resumes of pastors who agree with their "agenda" seeking a church; then sending these out to churches with vacant pulpits, who have, in the past, supported the Baptist General Association of Virginia (with it's own data base of individuals); but have not learned that *the SBCV is not the same organization*. (See article below on SBCV and BGAV).

It appears that a "bait & switch" tactic is being used: by bringing [Shawn Ames](#) into the picture: *as if he is a centrist Southern Baptist, which he is not*. SBCV, as noted, was started by a disgruntled group in 1993, (Former SNBC pastors Roger Mardis and Scott Harris, supported this group) and officially organized in 1996, at Grove Ave Baptist Church, with the primary aim of continuing their "conservative take over" of the SBC at the grassroots level, in the state of Virginia.

[In fact, in August 2009, Shawn Ames wrote that he agreed with a published article that was AGAINST support of the Cooperative Program! Shawn Ames is no Southern Baptist...and I'm beginning to wonder if David Slayton truly is.](#)

They have their own headquarters and attempt to co-opt pastors unwittingly, into using their programs, and funnel money into their organization, instead of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program. This has hurt many of the Virginia Baptist supported institutions in the state. The SBCV provides, for the most part, church planting resources, which is David Slayton's forte; as he continues to turn South Norfolk Baptist into a mirror image of the "ROC" (Richmond Outreach Center) which is a strictly "Seeker Sensitive" "Emergent Church."

South Norfolk Baptist Church gave \$ 17,882.00 to this splinter group (SBCV) in 2013 and \$ 14,744.00 in 2014. This is money that is *not* going to support the real Baptist organization (The BGAV) in the state of Virginia, but an off-brand splinter organization, which was started, and is still led by a disgruntled group of so-called "fundamentalist" pastors, which group includes David Slayton.

With the church in serious financial crisis, having recently cut \$ 8,000.00 from the pastor's salary package, cut the "worship leader's" salary in half, and will no longer pay increases for any employees' health benefits....why is the church sending thousands of dollars to this splinter group, SBCV (Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia) which does not truly support the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Program, through the Baptist General Association of Virginia?

The SBCV is the same organization, which the pastor claimed (in a sermon on January 4, 2015); he had highlighted his SHRMP social gospel program in their last Fall meeting with a video. **But that was *not* at the BGAV meeting; it was at the SBCV at Colonial Heights Baptist Church, one of the known supporters of this splinter group.**

BUT let's be clear about this.....

**The *SBCV* is *not* the same as the *BGAV***



## The Baptist General Association of Virginia

Scene of the first meeting of the BGAV at Second Baptist Church, Richmond. Coming out of the doorway is Robert Baylor Semple, the first president. Seated on the sawhorse left over from the construction of the new church house are (l-r) Edward Baptist and William Todd, the first clerk. Standing just beyond Todd is Luther Rice, the pioneer missionary who interested Virginia Baptists in missions. (From an article by Fred Anderson, Executive Director, Virginia Baptist Historical Society).

### Looking for Endorsement from the Living....and the Dead

The pastor has also called individuals *by name during sermons*, over the past year; both living and deceased; such individuals used in his sermons to bolster his position of the Social Work programs he espouses. *If he only knew the truth.* I have ministered to 4 families who lost loved ones, in the last 3 years, who clearly told me that they did not want their funerals held in South Norfolk Baptist because of the entertaining “worship” and recreation he now supports. Pastors should NEVER call out individuals by name in a sermon, trying to raise your position and program in the eyes of the congregation.

### Looking for More Endorsement

Again, out of the pulpit, the pastor has brought back Lynn Hardaway (Sept 2014) for another sermon which began with a laundry list of statistics compiled by the Rick Warren devotee Ed Stetzer; and then became cynical about everything that did “work” in the past: theologically sound hymns: “Blest be the Tie...if that’s

all people see, why would they want to join that?"....The church as we knew it is gone. We need a re-boot. Let's just accept the new reality...(whatever that means)....that the church we knew is gone."

(If South Norfolk Baptist is "gone" it's because he has supported a pastor who has turned South Norfolk Baptist into a pagan entertainment center, modeled after the "Richmond Outreach Center" which the pastor admired and apparently wanted to emulate. I blame him as much as the pastor, for the current state of the church).

Of course, realize what Hardaway is really doing here: he is trying to create emotional crisis within his listeners; for if the church can be frightened by threats of losing their pastor, public opinion surveys, declining membership, financial ruin, or just plain lack of unity, they will be prepared to look for a solution. Older members who have worked together for years, will not be prepared to take decisive steps against their "family" members in church leadership unless they have a strong incentive to do so.

What Lynn Hardaway is doing with his aforementioned comments, dovetail precisely with what Rev. Slayton said in a recent sermon, when he noted several ministers he knew were on the verge of leaving...**all this talk is devised to create "emotional imbalance," and uncertainty provides this fuel.**

Then, he made the statement: "We need to go back to the beginning. Find the values that made Christianity a powerhouse in the First Century." (Those 'values' does not include bringing sinful practices of the 21st Century, into the church; does not include endorsing heresy in the pulpit; does not include pagan entertainment as a substitute for the true Worship of God; does not include majoring on a "social gospel" and recreation instead of serious discipleship training; does not mean abandonment of a prayer service that the pastor leads and participates in; and last, but not least, in light of Hardaway's statement of "loving them, caring for them," {i.e., the unsaved in the community}, it does not mean a pastor who does not love his congregation, and who browbeats his listeners every Sunday morning, and has no diplomacy in dealing with the membership).

And when the time comes for another Intentional Interim, I hope the church will have the wisdom to seek the counsel of the Virginia Baptist General Board in Richmond, and not the local "Bridge Network" which seems to be tainted with Rick Warren heresy. I have already successfully advised another church seeing an intentional interim pastor to NOT secure one thru the "Bridge Network."

### More about Lynn Hardaway's philosophy.....

The "Seeker Sensitive" philosophy of Rick Warren and the "Growing Healthy Churches" philosophy of Paul Borden, being perpetrated on unsuspecting congregations is obviously Hardaway's "new reality;" because he endorsed, in this sermon, the heretical teaching of Rick Warren: **"You've seen Rick Warren's outline of 'Your Shape,' that's what you need to find. That's true."** Really? **Rick Warren's heresy is what South Norfolk Baptist needs?** He told them, "Your purpose is to serve God by serving others." That is a key-component of Warren's "Purpose Driven Life" heretical methodology. If you "Google" that phrase, "Your purpose is to serve God by serving others," you will *immediately* come to Rick Warren's website!!

He also told the congregation that they need to "bite their tongue" concerning their criticism of the church in public; well, he needs to "bite *his* tongue" in endorsing such heretical nonsense!

(See the film **"Church of Tares"** on this website for more information about who Rick Warren is and why his theology is not only flawed, but is heresy with a capital "H." This film opened my eyes to what is going on in many of our churches. The "Seeker Sensitive" Heresy webpage on this site has additional information about this problem that has infiltrated other churches, like South Norfolk Baptist).

Lynn Hardaway exegeted very little scripture in this message (in fact it was more of a pep talk to those who are disappointed in the direction the church is going); gave a sub-rosa endorsement of the current pastor, and an endorsement for the "Seeker Sensitive" and "Growing Healthy Churches" heretical theology, of how a church should be organized for outreach: be seeker sensitive to the culture...give the pagan what they want, be passionate, love them, and they'll come to church....never mind that you might loose most of your current members in the process.

Lynn Hardaway did his thesis for a degree in "Church Health" (Liberty Baptist Seminary {not a Southern Baptist Seminary}) and it is revealing, as it details his connection with one Dr. Paul Borden, who belongs to the American Baptist Convention West (ABCW) which is a sub-set of the American Baptist Convention denomination, **(which approves the ordination of women pastors which goes against Southern Baptist teaching)**; and directs the "Growing Healthy Churches" (GHC) Network. Examination of the effects Borden's program has had on Presbyterian, Methodist, Adventist, and Lutheran Churches is instructive.



The GHC Network that Hardaway supports viz Borden is interesting from the standpoint of how chaos is deliberately created within a congregation by Borden's program (in some cases getting the church to vote to install "Elders" instead of the Biblically correct office of the Deacon; then watching the "Elders" vote out their Pastor).

This program advocates leadership changes effected through a series of well-staged crises, designed to manipulate the membership. Borden calls this process a "consultation." Essentially the church is presented with a set of statistics, survey results or other negative reports which indicate that the church is in "plateau," "decline," or perhaps even bordering on death. The "consultant" conducts a fact-finding mission by consulting existing church leaders to determine who will be supportive of GHC and who will not.

Then comes a series of meetings to address broadly described "problems" in the church. Often the consultant will create the problems themselves, as they push for "change" by deliberately ignoring existing church order. Sometimes the consultant will, through the pastor, ask for a knowledgeable individual, to write a brief history of the church for presentation; it is then usually subsumed (ignored and unused) in the process. A consultant will often tell stories about churches that opted for "change" which are now thriving with many young families, while those churches who stayed as they were, ended up losing their pastor, losing membership, and eventually closing.

All of this builds a backdrop of fear and dissatisfaction in the church, and is calculated to provide "emotional fuel" or "leverage," so that the church will respond decisively when the consultant calls for formal action to be taken. As you can imagine, having such unpleasant things go on in your church is disturbing, particularly if it appears that the new pastor is being undermined in his efforts to spread the Gospel.

Following a "consultation" the congregation is exhorted to submit its will and judgment to the wishes of the pastor, so that the new "vision" which is "cast" for growth and health, can be achieved. The pastor then selects his sub-leaders (like he did at South Norfolk when he replaced the Minister of Music with an untrained "Worship Leader" and also elevated a theologically untrained Youth Worker to pastoral status with preaching duties); those whom he expects to respond with loyalty and unquestioning deference. (Removing the pipe organ console was done deliberately by the pastor and resulted in emotional instability by some in the congregation, which he then replaced with a praise band/team). It's like what one long-time member of the church told me 3 years after he came:

"Well, we think we know what he is doing....". Then, last year, the individual told me, that what he had done was disruptive and was destroying the work of the church; that there was no longer real discipleship training, music program and unity.

**Taking control of a church invariably involves changing the system of church organization.** Rather than using the power of the Gospel to change hearts and win support in his efforts to proclaim spiritual truth, **GHC ideology encourages the "leader" to act like a king, employing politics, power and control.** In this war, the gospel is used as a pretext for wresting power and control from the church membership. With this achieved, GHC proponents hope to use their power to emulate popular mega-churches (in this case, read: Richmond Outreach Center).

Those in positions of church leadership, who maintain their moral convictions about the sacredness of the evangelistic message as Southern Baptists, are seen as a major impediment to church growth.....they must be removed. (This is one reason why the current pastor would not listen to complaints from members and will not agree to realign with the Virginia Baptist General Board in Richmond). With all this grabbing for power and so-called accountability, one serious issue seems to have been overlooked: Who's going to answer to Christ?

Until I researched Lynn Hardaway's background and connected the dots to Paul Borden, I had no idea that the problem now facing South Norfolk was so severe. Lynn Hardaway has definitely taken Rev. Slayton on board, not only with the "Purpose Driven" heresy, but also with the GHC idea of how to "transition" the church, Rick Warren-style, with culture-friendly "evangelistic" worldly programs that border on the bizarre.

For Southern Baptist Churches in the Norfolk area, Hardaway is the kingpin, go-to- guy for GHC programing. Hardaway has been involved in Central Baptist, Temple Baptist, and Blackwater Baptist.

Hardaway facilitates, according to his seminary thesis, the changes in the local churches by way of "Pastors' Cluster" meetings of 6-8 pastors who meet to learn the techniques and receive "coaching" in his "Seeker Sensitive" methodology.

## The Truth Concerning "Growing Healthy Churches" (GHC)

Endorsed by

[Donald Lynn Hardaway](#), who has connections with [Paul D. Borden](#), one of his mentors while completing his D.Min. thesis at Liberty Seminary (*which is not a Southern Baptist Seminary*), in November 2012; and a founder of the GHC movement.

Hardaway is totally immersed in [Borden's "GHC" model](#), to the point, that in his thesis (which can be found online), he stated that **the pastor is NOT responsible for Pastoral Care to the Congregation; that the Congregation is! What Southern Baptist seminary teaches that unbiblical concept?**

**He is also not in favor of using committees in the church.** Perhaps this is the reason why Slayton, who apparently agrees with Hardaway's methods, appears so dictatorial in his dealing with the congregation (examples given elsewhere in this Introductory Narrative); and could this be why he is developing the idea of "Interns?"

I also discovered in that thesis, where Hardaway quotes [Borden](#) discussing a **"crippling effect" that results from Sunday morning worship**, because it doesn't focus on the "mission and vision" of the church. (**Whose "vision is being cast?"**) Again, this is unbiblical, because **the purpose of Worship is NOT for the unbeliever; it is for the Christian....this is the core philosophy of the "Seeker Sensitive" heresy.**

This is why David Slayton, with Hardaway's mentorship, has turned the worship service at SNBC upside down, in order to pander to the unbelieving pagan....to be *relevant*....to the culture. He continued this in his January 4, 2015 sermon, stating that the church had to be "relevant" to the people in order to attract them in; that "most of the churches in the area had empty pews." But how wrong he is! I have attended a church in the Tidewater area that continues to support traditional worship with Bible preaching, hymns that speak to the heart, and music that stirs the soul....and the pews are not empty! They are filled week after week; and young adults....with children attend! I do not prognosticate nor am I given to prophesy, but if I did, I would predict that if Rev. Slayton continues the way he is going, with "Sheep Beating" sermons that start out with some folksy story, segue into Scripture, then end up promoting his "Social Gospel" ministries, and lack true Exposition of Scripture, week after week, the pews in his church will be empty!

Hardaway even has "advice" in his thesis, for changing the church's interior architecture to be conducive to the "target population." So, we now know the answer to the "Why" ..... a pool table, secular dancing, Hip-Hop, Rap, emphasis on recreation for young people, removal of the pipe organ console (out of sight/out of mind), removal of last full time Minister of Music, exclusive use of "7-11" Hymns, intransigence when dealing with the senior adults, exclusive interest in being relevant to the pagan culture.

### **A Closer Look at a sermon by Lynn Hardaway at SNBC:**

Lynn Hardaway, in his recent sermon, with the pseudo-title, "Protos Mega," told the congregation at South Norfolk, about Ed Stetzer's flawed theory, which classifies "types of Christians." Some years ago, I was invited to submit research to the Pew Research organization. Having studied Educational Statistics and done several research studies, I know that if one has an overriding personal agenda, he can lie with statistics. Now looking at the very flawed data being mined by Stetzer, and at some of the very dubious associations between some of the so-called leaders in our SBC, especially on the local level, I've got to wonder, does anyone vet anyone anymore, before they get before a congregation and make such grand pronouncements?

Hardaway not only came across as (listen to it for yourself at the South Norfolk Baptist website online) *ex cathedra*; the go-to-guy, with all the answers; but the church needed a "re-set," focusing more on "community" and "with more passion" (a favorite phrase of Hardaway's/Slayton's and *code words* used by the Seeker Sensitive/Church Growth practitioners) but he did this with "Sheep Beating" in the process, telling the congregation off; telling them to "bite their tongue!"

Honestly, inviting the membership to "re-set" the admittedly troubled pastoral-church relationship with "Sheep Beating"..... the congregation is not going to be receptive after such verbal abuse. (We have been informed that Hardaway "cleaned house" at one of his former pastorates in Norfolk).

By what authority does Hardaway have, to come into a congregation and do such a thing? By his being an associate with the "Bridge Network" of churches? One would have expected a more ministerial professional pulpit appearance. **I simply cannot remember in all my years attending that church, ever hearing any guest minister hurling such abuse onto the membership.** This

congregation does not deserve such abuse, at the hands of Hardaway or Slayton, as I have heard for myself, on the tapes. They both need to go back and re-read the scripture in 1 Timothy and Titus, concerning their duties as Pastors.

Since the "Sheep Beating" sermon by Hardaway, Slayton returned to the pulpit with a pair of Eisegetical sermons and more "Sheep Beating" of his own. Then, on November 3rd, he toned down his rhetoric, returned with a more mild-mannered tone, but still pushing, sub-rosa, his "Social Gospel" campaign, with another sermon that was short on substance, and long on folksy illustrations.

### **Ed Stetzer, endorsed by Hardaway**

Stetzer recently wrote a glowing report on the heretical, seeker-sensitive, "[Hillsong Church in Australia](#), (which has invited "Prosperity Gospel" and "Word of Faith" heretics to "preach") in the March 2014 issue of "Christianity Today" magazine (retained for verification). **But what he didn't say in the article was, that some of those invited to [Hillsong](#), included Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, Joyce Meyer, and "Bishop" T.D. Jakes.**

**In addition to stating there was nothing wrong with the theology proclaimed at Hillsong (not true), Stetzer stated he's waiting on an invitation to preach there?!**

### **So, who is Ed Stetzer, whom Hardaway quoted extensively?**

Stetzer works in the research department of SBC's LifeWay organization, while also listed as senior pastor of a church on the side (his dual income from both high-powered positions, has been questioned by several pastors), and supports Rick Warren's "Purpose Driven" agenda.

May I say, frankly, that if the pastor is unable to properly vet *who* is invited into the pulpit of the church, and is not properly carrying out his duties, as clearly spelled out in the Bible, then, Deacons, you have a Biblical responsibility to ensure that those you minister to, are not fed that which is not Biblical.

Ed Stetzer is one of the big names in the "Leadership Network" system put together by Bob Buford and his mentor, Peter Drucker. (Drucker also mentored Rick Warren and Bill Hybels, among many others, in order to create a transforming church system.)

Ed Stetzer has endorsed a book, "Jesus Manifesto," filled with Neo-Orthodox Heresy.

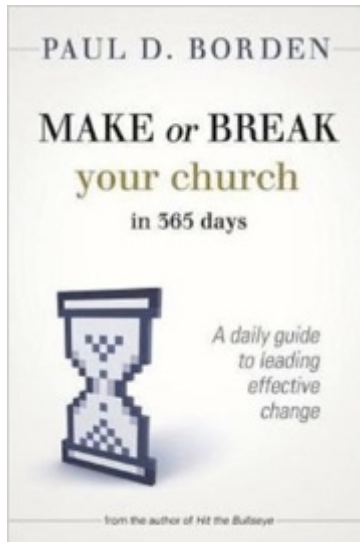
Stetzer is keynoting this year's "EXPONENTIAL" conference at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, and is a key "Church Planter," responsible for planting the kind of church that will lead us into a globalized system like lambs to the slaughter. (See the articles below the radio broadcast).

The churches Ed Stetzer is talking about planting are those planted for "goats," not "sheep." You'll almost never hear the full Gospel preached or repentance for sins mentioned in these churches.

If you don't know the dangerous deception that invented the words "Missional," Transformational," "Spiritual Formation," and the unbiblical "Church Growth" model, you need to hear the interview, posted on this webpage, with Sarah Leslie, who has done extensive research on this heretical movement.

There are several excellent articles about Ed Stetzer, and then articles about the "Growing Healthy Churches" movement, and several audio and video items that document the heresy that Rick Warren teaches, on this website.

The "Seeker Sensitive movement has to be Hardaway's 'new reality,' because he also endorsed the heretical teaching of Rick Warren: "You've seen Rick Warren's outline of 'Your Shape,' that's what you need to find. That's true." Really? Rick Warren's heresy of "Name It/Claim It: Your Shape" is what the South Norfolk membership needs? I don't think so! Lynn Hardaway exegeted very little scripture in this message (in fact it was more of a pep talk to those who are disappointed in the direction the church is going), gave a sub-rosa endorsement of the current pastor, and an endorsement for the "Seeker Sensitive" heretical theology of how a church should be organized for outreach: be seeker sensitive to the culture....give the pagan what they want, and they'll come to church.



One of Paul Borden's books outlining his philosophy for taking over a church. Its title is very telling. Lynn Hardaway has *intensively* studied this man's methodology, as evidenced by the Thesis he wrote for Liberty Seminary, a non-Southern Baptist Seminary.

### Ed Stetzer's Problematic Statistics

**The article, "Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore," tells why they are a problem:**

By Steve McSwain, Speaker, Author, Counsel to Faith-Based Organizations and Congregations, and a Spiritual Teacher.

That's the title of a new book written by Joani Schultz and Thom Schultz. And it's a question those leaving are more than ready to answer. The problem is, few insiders are listening.

And, of course, that *IS* the problem.

In a recent issue of *Christianity Today*, for example, Ed Stetzer wrote an article entitled, "[The State of the Church in America: Hint: It's Not Dying.](#)" He states: "The church is not dying... yes... in a transition... but transitioning is not the same as dying."

Really? What cartoons have you been watching?

Clearly, the *real* Church *is* dying. Do your research, Mr. Stetzer. According to the [Hartford Institute of Religion Research](#), more than 40 percent of Americans

"say" they go to church weekly. As it turns out, however, less than 20 percent are actually in church. In other words, more than 80 percent of Americans are finding more fulfilling things to do on weekends.

Furthermore, somewhere between 4,000 and 7,000 churches close their doors every year. Southern Baptist researcher, Thom Rainer, in a recent article entitled "[13 Issues for Churches in 2013](#)" puts the estimate higher. He says between 8,000 and 10,000 churches will likely close this year.

Between the years 2010 and 2012, more than half of all churches in America added not one new member. Each year, nearly 3 million more previous churchgoers enter the ranks of the "religiously unaffiliated."

Churches aren't dying?

No, of course not. Churches will always be here. But you can be sure, churches are going through more than a mere "transition." I study these things carefully. I counsel church leaders within every denomination in America, having crisscrossed this country for nearly two decades counseling congregations as small as two hundred in attendance to churches averaging nearly 20,000 in weekly attendance. As I see it, there are "7" changing trends impacting church-going in America. In this article, I'll address the "7" trends impacting church-going.

Trends Impacting Church Decline:

### **1. The demographic remapping of America**

Whites are the majority today at 64 percent. In 30 to 40 years, they will be the minority. One in every three people you meet on the street in three to four decades will be of Hispanic origin. In other words, if you are not reaching Hispanics today, your church's shelf life is already in question.

Furthermore, America is aging. Go into almost any traditional, mainline church in America, observe the attendees and you'll quickly see a disproportionate number of gray-headed folks in comparison to all the others. According to [Pew Research](#), every day for the next 16 years, 10,000 new baby boomers will enter retirement. If you cannot see where this is headed, my friend, there is not much you can see.



## 2. Technology

Technology is changing everything we do, including how we "do" church. Yet, there are scores of churches that are still operating in the age of the Industrial Revolution. Instead of embracing the technology and adapting their worship experiences to include the technology, scores of traditional churches, mainline Protestant, and almost all Catholic churches do not utilize the very instruments that, without which, few Millennials would know how to communicate or interact. (A recent study in 2014, reveals there is a renewed interest of Millennials and Baby Boomers, in returning to churches *that have traditional worship and music. They are not interested in the rock and roll of the "seeker sensitive" genre*).

What they should be more concerned about is why the Millennials have little or no interest in *what* they have to say.

## 3. Leadership Crisis

Enough has been written about this in the past. But you can be sure, clergy abuse, the cover-up by the Church, and "seeker sensitive preachers and congregations have been driving people away from the Church, and continue to drive people away, faster than any other causes combined.

## 4. Competition

People have more choices on weekends than simply going to church. Further, the feelings of shame and guilt many people used to feel and church leaders used to promote for not attending church every week is gone.

There are still those, however, who want to categorize Christians as an explanation for the church's decline in attendance in a futile effort to make things not look so bad. But this, too, is the illusion that many church leaders and denominational executives are perpetrating but nobody is paying attention. They are just too blind to see that.

For example, in the very same article I referenced above, Ed Stetzer has concocted three different categories of Christians he conveniently thinks explains the dire situation faced by the church.

He says there is a kind of "classification" system between those who "profess Christianity" as their faith choice.

- First, he (Stetzer) says there are *cultural Christians* or those who "believe" themselves to be Christians simply because their culture says they are. But, clearly, he implies they are not.
- Second, he classifies a group of *congregational Christians*, which he says are not much better off than the first misguided group, except that these are loosely connected to the church.
- Third, he notes the third group, which no doubt he ranks as "his" group, that he calls the *convictional Christians*. These are the true Christians who are actually living their faith, according to Ed Stetzer.

I've got news for you, Mr. Stetzer, there are scores of people who have left the church, not because they possess some phony or inferior faith, as you would like to believe, but precisely because they do not want to be around judgmental people like you. They have left, not to abandon their faith, but precisely because they wish to preserve it. You would be much better off to leave the judgment-making to Someone infinitely more qualified to do so (Matt. 7:1).

## 5. Religious Pluralism

Speaking of competition, there is a fifth trend impacting the decline of the church in America. People have more choices today. Credit this to the social changes in the '60s, to the Internet, to the influx of immigrants and minorities, to whatever you'd like, but the fact is, people today meet other people today of entirely different faith traditions and, if they are discovering anything at all, it is that there are scores of people who live as much, if not more, like Christ than many of the Christians they used to sit beside in church.

The diversity of this nation is only going to expand. Which is why, you might debate some of Diana Eck's conclusions, the Harvard scholar and researcher, but her basic premise is correctly stated in the title of her book, *A New Religious America: How a 'Christian Country' Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*.

## 6. The "Contemporary" Worship Experience

This, too, has contributed to the decline of the church. It's been the trend in the last couple of decades for traditional, mainline churches to pretend to be something they're not. Many of them have experimented with praise bands, the installation of

screens, praise music, leisure dress on the platform, and... well... you know how well that's been received.

Frankly, it has largely proven to be a fatal mistake. Of course, there are exceptions to this everywhere and especially in those churches where there is an un-traditional look already, staging, an amphitheater-style seating, as well as the budget to hire the finest musicians to perform for worship. In traditional, mainline churches, however, trying to make a stained-glass atmosphere pass as the contemporary worship place has met with about as much success as a karaoke singer auditioning for *The X Factor*.

## 7. Phony Advertising

There's one more trend I'll mention I believe is having devastating impact on the Church and most certainly contributing to its decline. You cannot tell Millennials that your church welcomes everybody -- that all can come to Jesus -- and then, when they come, what they find is an emphasis by the pastor thru "vision casting," on one race and one age group.

You cannot say, "Everybody is welcome here if, by that, you really mean, so long as you're like the rest of the minority or select group we are trying to reach."

In the words of Rachel Evans, a millennial herself and a blogger for CNN, "Having been advertised to our whole lives, we millennials have highly sensitive BS meters."

In other words, cut the bull. If everyone is not really equally welcomed to the table at your church, stop advertising that you are open to anyone. That is not only a lie, but Millennials can see through the phony façade as clearly as an astronomer, looking through the Hubble telescope, can see the infinity of space.

There are other trends. These are just a few of them.

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**Why I have included this information about David Slayton's connection to Lynn Hardaway, AND Lynn Hardaway's endorsement of Ed Stetzer, (who has, in turn, endorsed the heretical Hillsong Church, in a recently published article):**

Because many years ago, sitting in a senior high school English class, Miss Margaret West gave some timely advice to the class: to watch who you associate

with as young people; you tend to become like them, perhaps picking up bad habits you will later regret, and you tend to marry those you hang out with. I never forgot that.

That admonition was later reinforced by Dr. Delgado at Bluefield College, when he addressed my freshman class in a chapel service, and stated that we as individuals, are constantly making a record of our lives, not only in the academic world, but in the social aspects as well. He also stressed the importance of those we associated with.

I therefore consider it to be a serious matter when a pastor starts to associate himself with those who are theologically unsound; or those who have purloined biased statistics and foisted these on an unsuspecting congregation. It is also a very serious matter when a pastor, who oversees a church website, will allow endorsement of "Emergent Churches" that are heretical in doctrine, and, therefore, the heretics who lead them. (See "The Emergent Church" webpage on this site).

## **The Problematic Substitute**

### **Who is Kyle Wall?**

Out of the pulpit again, the pastor has arranged for a personal friend from Liberty University, and former pastor for a short tenure, of the independent, Atlantic Shores Church, Virginia Beach, [Rev. Kyle Wall](#), to substitute. [Rev. Wall is involved in the work of an independent, non-Baptist "Timothy Initiative" church planting for-profit organization, in Florida.](#) He presented an Eisegetical message that was theologically tissue-thin, and it was very apparently devised to promote the urban "Social Gospel" ministry of David Slayton; along with publically promoting his "The Timothy Initiative" website; **he even made the suggestion to the congregation of making donations to this program, which is not a Southern Baptist program!**

This "Initiative" is a "Emergent-Church/Seeker Sensitive" co-op, that has established churches that endorse heresy across the country in an organizational network called "[ARC](#)" ([Association of Related Churches](#)) which is a strictly non-denominational, loosely run organization, that has sponsored new churches, **which have both husband and wife as pastors in several cases;** and who have slim to none theological training. (One man stated that he started preaching and leading worship at age 14! A closer look revealed that this man, as well as many others involved in this organization who are "planting churches" under their direction, went to "diploma mill" non-accredited schools.)

With no Southern Baptist seminary degree, [Kyle Wall](#) has an “interesting” background: in addition to previously preaching at the heretical “C3 Church,” Clayton, NC (an “Emergent/Seeker Sensitive” organization which is in the “ARC” and has ties to [Rick Warren](#), and also the heretical “Hillsong” movement; he stayed only 4 years as Pastor at Atlantic Shores, resigned in September 2014, (and where 2 pastors there were recently forced to resign in October 2014); he stayed 3 years as Associate Pastor at a non-denominational, “Seeker Sensitive” church in Franklin, TN; then 3 years as Pastor at a small Southern Baptist Church, Clovis, CA; as a student intern at a Dallas area Baptist Church for 4 years while attending a university; Student Minister at a Baptist Church in Orlando, FL for 2 years; Student Minister at a Methodist Church for 2 years (which church has left the Methodist Church, dropped the name “Wesleyan” and is now an “Emergent Church” involved in the Jewish Messianic movement with a Rabbi on their staff); Student Minister at London Bridge Baptist for 6 years.

Nevertheless, Wall’s appearance comes on the heels of a member of the congregation, Ted Nance, the previous Sunday, giving his testimony as the “sermon;” and somewhat previous to that, Lynn Hardaway.

Because [Rev. Slayton](#) is intimately familiar with [Kyle Wall](#) (they both went to Liberty University; stayed on the same residence hall floor; Wall admitted in his sermon he knew Slayton well; Wall was also a roommate of [Matt Fry](#), Pastor of the C3 Church {C3 stands for: Clayton Community Church}); we must conclude that Slayton has endorsed the Heresy of the C3 Network of Churches and the “ARC” Network of Churches....or else, why would he have allowed him into the pulpit?

### **The David Slayton---Kyle Wall---Matt Fry Connection**

This is not a commentary on David Slayton, Kyle Wall, or Matt Fry as persons, but out of the pulpit again, David Slayton has arranged for a personal friend from Liberty University, and former pastor of Atlantic Shores, Virginia Beach, [Rev. Kyle Wall](#), to substitute. [Rev. Wall is involved in the work of an independent, non-Baptist “Timothy Initiative” church planting for-profit organization, in Florida.](#) He presented an Eisegetical message that was theologically tissue-thin, and it was very apparently devised to promote the urban “Social Gospel” ministry of David Slayton; along with publically promoting his

“The Timothy Initiative” website; he even made the suggestion to the congregation of making donations to this program, which is not a Southern Baptist program!

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With no Southern Baptist seminary degree, Kyle Wall has an “interesting” background: in addition to recently preaching (July 2013) at the heretical “C3 Church,” Clayton, NC (an “Emergent/Seeker Sensitive” organization which is in the “ARC” and has ties to Rick Warren, and also the heretical “Hillsong” movement); he stayed only 4 years as Pastor at Atlantic Shores, resigned in September 2014, (and where 2 pastors there were recently forced to resign in October 2014); he stayed 3 years as Associate Pastor at a non-denominational, “Seeker Sensitive” church in Franklin, TN; then 3 years as Pastor at a small Southern Baptist Church, Clovis, CA; as a student intern at a Dallas area Baptist Church for 4 years while attending a university; Student Minister at a Baptist Church in Orlando, FL for 2 years; Student Minister at a Methodist Church for 2 years (which church has left the Methodist Church, dropped the name “Wesleyan” and is now an “Emergent Church” involved in the Jewish Messianic movement with a Rabbi on their staff); Student Minister at London Bridge Baptist for 6 years. He is currently a member of the “Emergent” and heretical New Life Providence Church, Virginia Beach.

Nevertheless, Wall’s appearance comes on the heels of a member of the congregation, Ted Nance, the previous Sunday, giving his testimony; and somewhat previous to that, Lynn Hardaway.

*Because Rev. Slayton is intimately familiar with Kyle Wall (they both went to Liberty University; stayed on the same residence hall floor; Wall admitted in his sermon he knew Slayton well; Wall was also a roommate of Matt Fry, a leader in the heretical C3 Network, currently in a C3 ‘church’ in Clayton, N.C.) we must therefore conclude that Slayton has endorsed the Heresy of the C3 Network of Churches and the “ARC” Network of Churches....or else why would he have*

*allowed him into the pulpit?* (More about Matt Fry, later in this paper).

**From the “C3 Church Watch” website, we learn:**

Author John Barclay records the history of the C3 Movement from its early beginnings in his book “Arise” (endorsed by heretic Phil Pringle).

Chapter 12 is titled ‘Counseling’. On page 115, Barclay writes about the testimony of someone called Peter McHugh between 1982-3. Barclay wrote, “He [Peter] and Mark Kelsey had studied together at University” (pg. 115).

Barclay records Peter McHugh getting saved and explores the process how his wife got ‘saved’. John Barclay writes,

“He got a letter away as soon as possible to Lyn, and when the reply came back it was to tell him very simply she never wanted to see him again. That of course took no account of a number of factors, which had since come into operation, factors which Lyn then could never understand.

The exercising of faith by a very determined man of God can work miracles, and Peter began the positive confession of the restoration of their marriage. In the week prior to Lyn’s return to Australia he spoke constantly aloud to affirm that she would be saved. He said it over and over, out loud, speaking his faith in thanks to God, and both Mark [Kelsey] and Phil [Pringle] agreed with him.

His own conversion had been so total and so swift that now there was no room for either doubt or failure. No possibility of it. He gave it no thought, but spoke out success.

‘Life and death’ we are told, ‘are in the power of the tongue’, and Peter now used that power to inject life into a once dead marriage.”

**(Source: John Barclay, Arise, 12 Counseling, Covenant Publishing, 1987, pg. 116-117.)**

Above, John Barclay recorded McHugh, Pringle and Kelsey practicing the Word of Faith Heresy. We have to stress this again: Phil Pringle endorsed and allowed John Barclay to record these events. Phil Pringle exposed Mark Kelsey and himself practicing the Word of Faith heresy.

If you read our older articles, (on the C3 Church Watch website) readers will be shocked to see the Word of Faith's connections to New Age and Occult practices.

You can see more at the website: <http://c3churchwatch.com/tag/heretics/>

**Now, let's take a closer look at the "ARC" (Association of Related Churches) to which Kyle Wall belongs:**

(From the Wartburg Watch website: <http://thewartburgwatch.com/2014/11/07/a-closer-look-at-pastors-in-the-arc/>)

Fast growth appears to be a top priority of leaders in the ARC church planting network. Perhaps their mantra is: "If we build it, they will come..."

That certainly appears to be the case for a number of pastors who associate with ARC (Association of Related Churches). As far back as 2007, ARC was well represented on a list of the [100 fastest growing churches 2007](#) (this is the corrected list). To be considered, a church must have . . .

- (1) grown by at least 500 people in attendance from '06-'07,
- (2) averaged over 1,000 people in weekly attendance in 2007, and
- (3) grown by a measurable percentage from '06-'07 (about 10% growth or more).

Here are some of the churches on the list that we have identified as belonging to ARC and their heretical 'pastors':

6. [New Life Church](#) (Conway, Arkansas) [Rick Bezet](#)
14. [Church of the Highlands](#) (Birmingham, Alabama) Chris Hodges
31. [Life Church](#) (Edmond, Oklahoma) [Craig Groeschel](#)
35. [Celebration Church](#) (Jacksonville, Florida) [Stovall Weems](#)
37. [Champions Center](#) (Tacoma, Washington) [Kevin Gerald](#)
78. [Seacoast Church](#) (primarily South Carolina) [Greg Surratt](#)



94. [Gateway Church](#) (Texas-multiple locations) [Robert Morris](#)

What an impressive list! The trend continued as the quote at the top of the post indicates.

Some of these pastors have such great friendships that they send congratulatory messages in the form of a rap.

What's even more amazing is that this group of pastors is closely associated with leaders outside the ARC circle. For example, let's take a look at the pastors who are members of the heretical Elevation Church's Compensation Committee where heretic Steven Furtick 'serves'. The Christian Post published an interesting article last year entitled [Who are the megachurch leaders who decide Elevation Church Pastor Steven Furtick's secret salary and influence his ministry?](#)

Here is the stunning excerpt from that piece (see how many ARC names you recognize):

The 2011 annual report also discloses the names of the men who comprise Elevation Church's Board of Elders:

"**Pastor Dino Rizzo** (Healing Place Church – Baton Rouge, LA), Dr. Jack Graham (Prestonwood Baptist Church – Plano, TX), Pastor Perry Noble (NewSpring Church – Anderson, SC), **Pastor Kevin Gerald** (Champions Centre – Seattle, WA), **Pastor Stovall Weems** (Celebration Church – Jacksonville, FL), [and] Pastor Steven also serves on the Board, but does not vote on his salary."

The Board of Overseers members, were personally recruited by Pastor Furtick, according WCNC-TV.

As we have previously discussed, Dino Rizzo has been relocated to Birmingham after his indiscretion came to light. And you may remember who recently spoke at the Gateway Conference (and cozied up to Mark Driscoll) – [Steven Furtick](#). Furthermore, you may recall that it was **Robert Morris**, pastor of Gateway Church (which hosted the Gateway Conference), who introduced Mark Driscoll and had him address conference attendees. Note also, Stovall Weems is part of this \*compensation\* group as well. Three members of the ARC are/were on Furtick's salary committee yet Furtick's church is not a member of the ARC? Never forget that Furtick [built a mega mansion](#) in North Carolina. The compensation committee did a great job making sure Furtick was compensated...

Speaking of Morris, we found it rather odd that he wears the title of "**Apostolic Leader**" for Trinity Fellowship ([link](#) – scroll down to bottom). Hmm... where have we heard that label before??? [C.J. Mahaney immediately comes to mind...](#)

Only recently has heretic Robert Morris come onto our radar screen, and we are just beginning to research his theological beliefs. In so doing, we came across a [post](#) written last year by FBC Jax Watchdogs, which includes an enlightening clip that reveals what Robert Morris believes about tithing. As you probably know, we absolutely do not buy what Morris is preaching here.

There is so much to learn about Robert Morris and the ARC, but what stunned us the most was their prominence on the [Church Law Group](#) website. Check out this screen shot.

The screenshot shows the Church Law Group website. The navigation bar includes "Home", "Our Firm", "Our Team", and "Our Services". The main heading is "Our Clients" with a dropdown menu currently set to "Robert Morris" and a "Select A Client:" label. Below this, the profile for Robert Morris is displayed, including a "Back" button. The profile features a portrait of Robert Morris and a testimonial quote from him.


**church**  
LAW GROUP

Home Our Firm Our Team Our Services

Our Clients  Select A Client:

**Robert Morris** Back

Gateway Church,  
Southlake, Texas



"I believe wisdom is found in wise counsel. My staff and I have found such counselors in Matt Anthony, David Middlebrook, and the entire team at The Church Law Group. As a church, we exist to help people and I have found that same heart and spirit in them. I want the world to look at the church and see excellence in all aspects, and Anthony & Middlebrook bring excellent legal counsel to the church."

Robert Morris, Senior Pastor  
Gateway Church  
Southlake, Texas

Chris Hodges, pastor of Church of the Highlands, is also featured on the Church Law Group website as is this group (see screen shot below).



Association of Related Churches

Birmingham, Alabama President  
Gregg Surratt

This law firm even represents heretics T.D. Jakes and Kenneth and Gloria Copeland!

Because these guys are closely aligned with a law firm specializing in church matters and go so far as to publicize their association on the internet, we would urge those who are considering joining an ARC church to be especially cautious. Caveat Emptor!

Rest assured, there will be much more to come on this "Association of Related Churches". The investigation has just begun.

### **Building the ARC – An Overview of this Church Planting Network**

**"The organization maintains an annual funding base of \$2 million dollars with ARC churches giving over \$8 million a year to missions. Today, over 400 churches strong, ARC has become not only a movement, but a collection of many "tribes" – all with a focus of planting those 2000 churches and impacting the world!"**

#### [History of ARC](#)

In Orange County, California the **2014 ARC Conference** is in full swing. Have you heard of **ARC**? It stands for "**Association of Related Churches**". This three-day conference, which is being held at the Saddleback Church Main Worship Center, wraps up tomorrow and features an interesting line-up of speakers ([link](#)).

ARC has recently come onto our radar screen, and here is some of what we are discovering about this church planting network.

## History

According to the ARC [website](#), six pastors met together in 2000 and formed the Association of Related Churches. Those men were: Greg Surratt, Billy Hornsby, Rick Bezet, Chris Hodges, Dino Rizzo, and Scott Hornsby. Greg Surratt, pastor of Seacost Church in Charleston, South Carolina, felt led to plant 2,000 church but didn't have a plan.

Here's what happened next (from the ARC website):

Greg offered both guys [Rick Bezet and Chris Hodges] \$25,000 to fund their plants and any monthly support needed to meet budget for their first year – a safety net that bolstered their confidence in planting. Going forward, Greg asked Rick and Chris to invest that same amount back into other church planters. Rick and Chris went on to plant their churches on the same day – February 4, 2001. Their successful launches and subsequent growth became the model for future ARC church plants.

By the following year, other church planters were “reusing” the money originally funded to Rick and Chris.

Billy Hornsby became ARC's president and served from 2001 to 2011. Under his leadership, the ARC network grew slowly at first. In 2006 nine churches were planted. In the years that followed this number was exceeded, and by 2009 around 50 churches were being planted per year. ARC began training hundreds of church planters each year. Billy Hornsby was diagnosed with terminal cancer in the latter part of 2010 and lost his battle on March 23, 2011.

The following year, Greg Surratt (whose vision was to plant 2,000 churches) became ARC president. As the website states:

The organization maintains an annual funding base of \$2 million dollars with ARC churches giving over \$8 million a year to missions. Today, over 400 churches strong, ARC has become not only a movement, but a collection of many “tribes” – all with a focus of planting those 2000 churches and impacting the world!

## Church Planting

ARC is comprised of quite a few churches as this [map](#) shows. Of course, being identified on the map comes at a price — the website [indicates](#) that:

ARC will recognize our Partner Churches and Ministry/Organization Partners that have invested in ARC a minimum amount of \$2400 annually (\$200/month) by placing their respective church or organization on our "Find a Church" page on the ARC website. The "Find a Church" page is our most viewed webpage where people find where ARC churches are located around the world.

ARC plans to plant 24 churches soon, as this [list](#) indicates.

### **Benefits of Becoming a Church Planter through ARC**

There are definite advantages to planting a church under the Association of Related Churches umbrella. Here they are according to the [FAQ](#) section of the ARC website:

\$30,000 – \$50,000 toward the launch.

Additional \$20,000, if needed, during the first six months to help your new church meet its budget.

Coaching and training from successful church planters and pastors.

Mentoring from some of the fastest growing churches in America.

Access to ARC's influence and resources.

"ARC Report" video and printed material at the end of the year.

Church listed on the ARC website map.

Regular communication and notification of all upcoming church launches.

### **Advanced Training**

Getting back to the ARC conference taking place in California, it's no wonder that church planters and those who aspire to be are flocking to the West Coast. Then there's the [Advanced Training](#) event coming up in early December which has a registration fee of \$499.00 (you may bring your spouse) followed by the [Start a Church](#) Assessment. Of course, travel, food, and accommodations are additional expenses to be incurred by the prospective church planter.

### **Funding**

Once a church plant gets up and running, the following financial guidelines are spelled out on the ARC [website](#):

It takes big money to plant a church, and when it comes to funding, our goal is to make sure you have the resources you need. If you complete all steps in the ARC process we will match the money you raise by contributing \$30,000 – \$50,000 in

the form of a zero-interest loan plus and up to an additional \$20,000, if needed, during the first six months to help your new church meet its budget.

Starting on month seven, after your launch, you will begin to repay ARC at a rate of 10 percent of your church income. Since ARC churches give 10 percent (or a tithe) to missions, this amount counts as your missions dollars during the repayment period.

Once you have repaid the funds loaned to you by ARC, your missions giving will be 2 percent to ARC and 8 percent or more to your choice of recipient(s).

And last but not least, here is the [ARC Team](#) that makes all of this church planting possible. One name particularly stands out – **Dino Rizzo**. You may remember that Dee wrote a [post](#) last November about his scandalous relationship with a church staff member. He was whisked away by his colleagues and now serves as Executive Director at ARC headquarters.

In addition to the expedient restoration of Rizzo, there are other concerns we have about ARC and those associating with this church planting network, which we will discuss in our upcoming post.

(End of website report)

## **The Kyle Wall----Matt Fry—Ed Stetzer Connection**

Shortly after appearing at South Norfolk Baptist, Kyle Wall was at Matt Fry’s C3 Church in Clayton, NC. (Full name: Matthew Dwight Fry. Father, Malcolm Craig Fry, who preached Matt’s ordination sermon, was a leader in the Free Will Baptist movement. The elder Fry was a Free Will Baptist minister for 54 years. He pastored 25 years in five states - Louisiana, Texas, Arizona, North Carolina and Tennessee. He had 3 sons: Craig, Jr., Franklin, and Matt; and 2 daughters: Pamela and Rebecca).

The C-3 website is instructive in the way this heretical church conducts itself. Ed Stetzer lowered himself to preach at this church in 2008, and made this statement from an article he wrote: “At C3 they have really thought through their mission, core beliefs and strategy. Front and center is an aim at being biblical while making Christ known and developing leaders.” That does NOT square with what we found on the C3 website:

First and foremost on their website is their plan of operation. [Not having a church constitution as such, they follow something called “The Flow”](#):

“The Flow is a set of core values that are an expression of the heart of our community. Everything we do is influenced and guided by them.”

And at the head of this list is “We are relevant,” which is the “Seeker Sensitive/Purpose Driven” model for “doing church.” They also include such things in “The Flow,” as: “We honor: We are a church that honors our leaders.” “We are a church that believes leaders go first.” (The pastor and his wife, as co-pastor, are definitely in charge here). “We are a church that focuses on building up disciples by relationships through Connect Groups.” [\(This is the same flawed business model \(aka “The Sticky Church”\) which David Slayton is now endorsing as of January 2015\).](#)

Then, down near the bottom of the C3 website, you see a set of watered down short list of doctrines they believe: God.....Jesus.....Spirit....Salvation.....Scripture..... Sacraments. And, that’s it. Brief, not detailed, all pastor/pastor-wife led.

[And Stetzer comments, unknowingly, on the heretical music used at C3:](#)

“The worship was very high energy. It has a concert feel and a [Hillsong](#) flavor. Matt tells me about 60% of the songs are Hillsong music.”

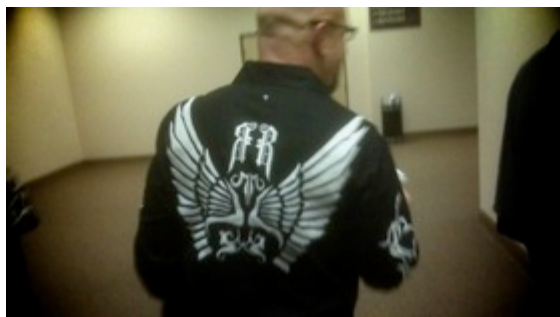
[Then, Stetzer made this telling comment:](#) “They are all about worship and making more worshippers through reaching the unchurched.”

“Making more ‘worshippers’?” What about leading people to Christ? They are “all about worship?” Anything else?

[Matt’s wife, Martha, is also a “Pastor” which is un-scriptural. \(See picture below\):](#)



Trying to be “relevant” and appeal to the pagan culture, Matt Fry picks out his clothes from a Harley Shop, according to Stetzer:



### **C3: Innovative or Compromising?**

Last Sunday, (June 2005) the *Raleigh News & Observer* ran a feature on a fast-growing church located southeast of Raleigh in Johnston County, North Carolina, near Clayton. [Cleveland Community Church](#), or "C3," as it's more commonly called, has a relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention and is pastored by a graduate of Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. However, the 7-year-old, non-denominational church isn't anything like your typical Falwell-inspired Southern Baptist church, as the *N&O's* Yonat Shimron reports: . . .

*Baptist in its roots, C3 works hard to draw in people who might otherwise spend their Sunday morning mowing the lawn or pushing a shopping cart at Home Depot. [Pastor Matt] Fry and his wife, Martha, try to dispel people's preconceived notions of church. They want them to feel comfortable physically, mentally and spiritually. The church's Web site encourages people to wear shorts, and the*



*service, called a "celebration," presents a cheerful, hopeful Christianity with few strings attached.*

*Nearly each service includes familiar pop songs U2's "Pride (In the Name of Love)," Foreigner's "I Want to Know What Love Is" or Queen's "You're My Best Friend" meant to be heard in a new context. And Fry's sermons all touch on some emptiness in people's lives for which there can only be one answer: Jesus.*

*"The goal is not to be cutting edge," said Fry, 39, who has developed a late-night TV dress code black T-shirt, jacket and jeans with a microphone attached to his ear. "It's to be relevant. That's the value. Are we relevant to our culture?"*

Despite its unconventional ways, C3, which is growing at a rate of 30 new members a month, states as one of its core beliefs in the [Mission & Values](#) section of its Web site, "We believe that the Bible is God's inspired word and is without error. While our theology is conservative, our methods are progressive."

Is Matt Fry and Cleveland Community Church on to something with their culturally relevant methods to reach people for Christ? Or have they crossed the line of being too much of the world and therefore compromising the message of the Gospels they are trying to convey?

In 2014, Fry attended the "Ultimate Life Conference" for Seeker Sensitive/Purpose Driven pastors. Several of his sermons have been reviewed by "Fighting for the Faith" and have been found to be "Purpose Driven" and Eisegetical.

### **Secular, Sinful Amusements, to Attract the Pagan**

Worldly amusements *like a pool table, and secular dance classes*, are now offered at the church....with the pastor's approval. These have no place in a church, and are counter-productive to Christian Ethics and Discipleship Training. A local businessman, I was told, now rents one "former" Sunday School classroom. Why? And what has happened to the many Hamilton upright pianos, built by Baldwin Piano Company, that were in every Sunday School assembly room? Sold for funding?

One lady told me that the pool table had been donated to the church. So? What if someone wanted to donate a slot machine or another worldly amusement? "Being donated" does not make a thing morally right. I have heard from many people in the Tidewater area, who have, on their own, heard about the current

pastor allowing a pool table into the church and are appalled. What am I suppose to tell them? That it's ok to bring the world into the church? Such nonsense brings shame on the cause of Christ.



### **Secular Dancing...allowed in the Church**

Rev. Slayton endorses bringing worldliness into the church Educational Building, with secular dancing in Hughes Hall (the church fellowship hall named in honor of my Father), under the guise of "serving families living in poverty;" allowing a professional dance studio (Mary Ann Wood) operate within the confines of the church's fellowship hall.



(Photo: Dancing in the Hughes Fellowship Hall)

Nowhere on their advertisement video, does it state any connection with Discipleship training, Bible Study, or a Christian purpose; only that the church is where it meets. Of course, how could it? ***This is pure worldly entertainment. (We have been informed that when he was pastor at Red Lane Baptist Church, Virginia, that he approved of dancing in the church and Contemporary Praise and Worship).***

## Rap Music for Jesus?



**Rev. Slayton has endorsed secular Hip-Hop and Rap music in the pulpit (seen in picture above).**

**His sermon, "Whose Wisdom" (Oct 2013) addressed the matter of Spiritual Wisdom of church leadership; by which he means himself; and why the church members needed to follow him. But we need to ask, "Follow him where? To endorse sinful music and recreation in the Church? To endorse Heretical teaching in the pulpit?"**

**In his sermon, "Authentic Love," (Jan 2015) he stated, "It is my biblical, spiritual responsibility to keep watch over you; because I've got to give account for that. It's your responsibility to let me do that with joy and not groaning. All of us can become Satan's mouthpiece....we can be used of the Devil to create trouble in the body of Christ." So true....I therefore observe that *he* is not properly keeping watch over the congregation. He will one day give an account to God for what *he's* doing.**

**Consider the following article: "Is it time for the church to reevaluate Lecrae?" (Lecrae is the Hip-Hop artist, that Rev. Slayton recently endorsed in the pulpit....no surprise there....his son, Jonathan, is now filming Hip-Hop/Rap inside the Auditorium and on the Roof of the Educational Building)!!**

**It's past time for South Norfolk Baptist to reevaluate their music program.**

## **HIP-HOP inside the Church Auditorium, and video taped on top the Roof, of the Church Educational Building**

Disrespect for the Lord's House has taken on "New Age" proportions, as, apparently, anything goes now at South Norfolk. I was directed to this video by one of the church members (who refuses to attend anymore due to the entertaining "worship" ad nauseum), and obviously produced by another member, showing young people Hip-Hopping inside, and on top of the roof of the Educational Building, *which is 3 stories high, with no railing for protection, with skylights one can fall through*, and which can only be reached by a straight-up steel ladder attached to the wall, behind a locked steel door. *How do I know this?* Because when my Father was pastor of this church, my brother Jim and I were strictly forbidden not to ever enter that room and attempt to climb up the steel ladder to the roof. We obeyed our Father. Let me say, that I am glad that my Father never lived to see this!

Here are "screen shots" taken directly from the video made for VBS 2011 (**they are NOT photoshopped, as Slayton tried to tell one member of the church, then related to me**). (In public domain, from the Internet; full video retained for verification).

**OK, so you like Hip-Hop. What would the City of Chesapeake's Child Protective Services say about the endangerment of these young people? Would the parents approve? Did they even know this was going on?**



**Dancing on top of the Educational Building**



**Down the Church aisle.**

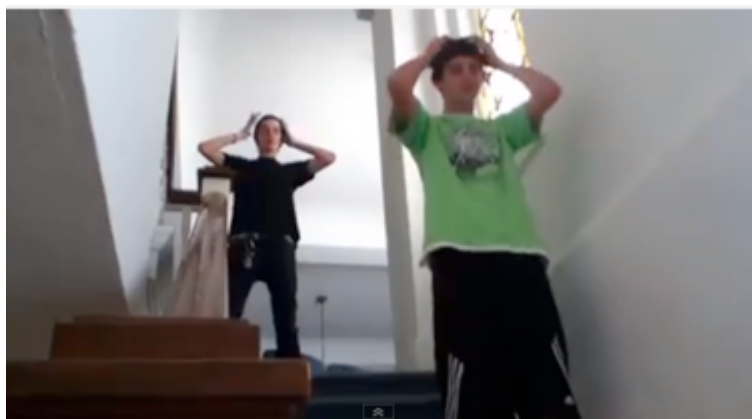


**Down the Church aisle.**



**PHOTO FROM VIDEO IS NOT "PHOTOSHOPPED":  
SHADOWS OF DANCING TEENAGERS CAN BE  
CLEARLY SEEN  
ON ROOFTOP.**

**SKYLIGHT IS DANGEROUS: IT WOULD  
COLLAPSE FROM THE WEIGHT OF AN  
INDIVIDUAL, WHO WOULD FALL TO THE  
FLOOR BELOW.**



**On the steps leading to the balcony. Also not safe.  
(I once fell down these steps as a child, and was helped up by Mr. Pruitt, then  
Minister of Education. I learned not to run in church)!**



(Apparently anything goes for “worship”.....so disrespectful; not to mention dangerous!)

**Hip-Hop and Rap**  
**returns.....recently discovered as posted on the**  
**Internet, inside the main Auditorium,**  
**and on the roof of the Educational Building....**  
**and some filmed at night, on top of the Educational**  
**Building!**

**(From public domain; filmed in 2015, and, as stated on**  
**the "end credits," by Jonathan Slayton, Pastor David**  
**Slayton's son.)**

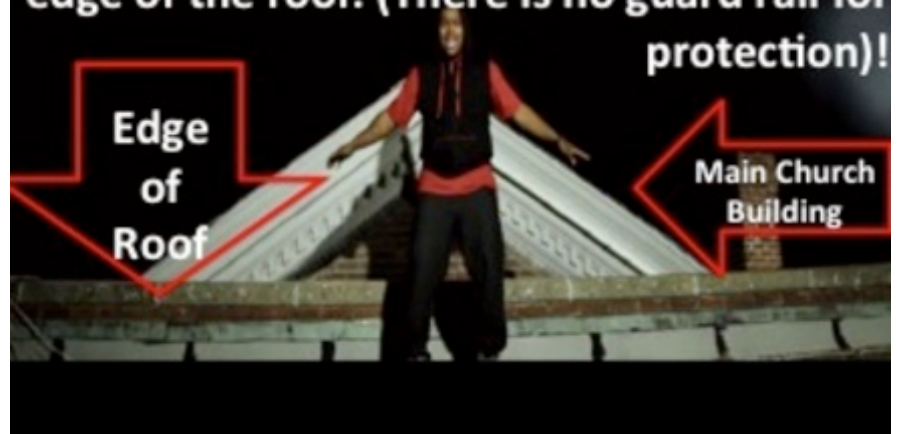
## On top the roof of the 3 Story Educational Building







**Filmed at night on top of Educational Building with main Church Building behind: Individual has backed up to the edge of the roof. (There is no guard rail for protection)!**







**BETWEEN THE MAIN CHURCH BUILDING  
AND THE EDUCATIONAL BUILDING**



**Is he “thowing gang hand signs?”**



**I've got to ask: what would the City of Chesapeake Child Protective Services think? What would the parents think if they knew their children had been placed in such a situation? Did they even know?**

**Let me see if I've got this correct.....  
 Rap and Hip Hop, which is lewd music, with body shaking movements, has been perpetrated on the South Norfolk Baptist Church congregation with the pastor's approval?**

**And his son is filming this lewd music?**

**My Question to Pastor David Slayton at South Norfolk Baptist, who is trying to make the church "relevant" and "seeker friendly" for minority youth:**

***Do you really know what HIP-HOP is?  
 (Even my wife asked me recently, "Has this pastor ever heard the words of hip-hop and rap "music".... and understand what is behind all the body movements?" Evidently not.)***

**And then, the young people are also being invited to attend Rap/Hip-Hop Concerts? (SEE below):**



***Youth  
 Concert  
 Saturday  
 November 7th***

**David Slayton continues to endorse Hip-Hop and Rap, as the SNBC Youth are now invited (for \$20 each, according to the SNBC Facebook) to hear Rap music at a satellite church of the “Seeker Sensitive/Emergent” New Life Providence ‘church’ in Virginia Beach, (which recently hosted a IHOP heresy conference.) (See the "Emergent Church" webpage for full discussion of the IHOP 'church').**

**New Life Church, in Deep Creek, Chesapeake (satellite 'church' of the one in Virginia Beach, is the location for the Rap concert set for November 2015. It has a female 'pastor' which is un-scriptural. The mission statement for the home church in Virginia Beach (which recently re-branded itself from "New Life Providence," to simply "New Life") and it's satellite 'campuses' is pure "Vision Casting" rhetoric. (See "Worship in the 21st Century" and "Seeker Sensitive heresy" webpages for full information about "Vision Casting.")**

**In their "re-branding," they overhauled their mission statement and, in addition to allowing female pastors, other statements are contradictory in nature, especially those that have acceptance of homosexuals in several veiled comments.**

**Andy Mineo, (who previously used the stage name "C-Lite") the hip-hop/rap artist taking the "stage" at New Life 'church' in Deep Creek, is a self-styled 'pastor,' who admitted in a recent interview that his music is inspired by reading non-Christian books. I have looked into what he claimed he read, and they are definitely off-the-wall; some dealing with a watered-down business approach to life and leadership. Mineo's claims that Acts 17 and Romans 12 give him license to do what he wants in using 'Christian' rap, is beyond the pale. In 2014, he stated in one interview that "Christian rap was corny."**

**In addition to ties to heretic Louie Giglio (on his website), in another revealing statement, Mineo said, "This is art; I don't have a religion." Then, there are his problematic associations: in order to advance his career, he stated he wants to get in tight with heretic rap star Kanye West, who has styled himself as another Jesus in his music and artistic costume. West, who has admitted he sold himself to the Devil, appeared in a music rap video "Power" which was pure occult heresy. Kanye's videos and performances are filled to overflowing with satanic ritual symbolism. He recently appeared on the cover of "Rolling Stone" Magazine (2006) as Jesus Christ wearing a crown of thorns! West appeared with Kim Kardashian in Paris, March 2015. (They are expecting their second child.)**

**Kanye West is one the prime examples that Jesus warns us about in Matthew 24:4-5:**

*"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."*

**Why would an individual (Mineo) calling himself a "Christian Rap" singer, which is a misnomer in itself, want to associate with someone like West?**

**Of course, this has been one of the key problems at South Norfolk: instead of promoting sound theological preaching, discipleship training, leading young people to appreciate great hymns and music of the faith, this pastor, has allowed the teaching of heresy, importation of sin into the church, and allowed the young people to be exposed to the likes of Mineo.**

### **Where is the church *field*?**

Rev. Slayton preached about "ploughing in a church field," in a 2013 sermon, in which he talked about reaching out to ethnic minority teens (a theme he became fixated on in his sermons over the years, as of this date, and which dominates the majority of his outreach programs); nothing was said about the hundreds of young white/Hispanic/and senior adults, in the South Norfolk/Portlock area; some who have recently moved into the area; some may be members of other churches not close by and do not attend; *but have never been invited to SNBC*. Of course, if the church is only catering to youth of one ethnic minority group, using rock & roll music, in a un-scriptural "worship" service, and a "Christmas Variety Show" (read: Entertainment); with non-expository/without-scripture-sermons, that are only geared to the level of young people; with worship that is now entertainment; they may feel uncomfortable about visiting a circus.

### **Ignoring the Adults**

Several young adult and senior members have informed me that they are leaving, because they feel that a judgmental pastor, (who is driven by his agenda of catering to one ethnic minority, perhaps burdened by a sense of loss from his own broken home up-bringing, which he has mentioned from the pulpit on several occasions), with no interpersonal skills, is ignoring them, has cut their budget items (the church financial records have not been audited for the last two years) in favor

of youth recreation; and is now contemplating the hiring of a black youth worker, with no other full-time paid ministerial staff, while ignoring their parents and all the other young and senior adults in the area. Adults are also being ignored by listening to eisegetically-researched, sermons that are aimed mainly to the youth in the audience; and certainly by the Youth Worker who has been consistently allowed into the pulpit. I am assuming that the pastor's time is so taken up with all things recreation and social work, that he has had not time to study for his sermons.

### **An “Emergent Church” for Model and Methodology**

In 2011, the pastor took his key church leaders, to the “Emergent/Post-Modernist/Social Gospel” Richmond Outreach Center (“ROC”) in Richmond, Virginia, *in order to learn their “style” of “worship” and “Social Gospel” outreach; and then, transfer that methodology to South Norfolk Baptist.* Pastor and laity were tutored in this entertainment nonsense, by several “ROC” pastors, **four of whom later resigned in 2013, in disgrace; and the senior pastor has now been indicted on felony charges in Fort Worth, Texas.** Yet, the pastor continued to defend this worldly methodology and the “ROC” from the pulpit, in 2013.

He allowed a sloppy-dressed young man from the “ROC” into the pulpit, whose “presentation,” which appeared on the church website and YouTube, was not biblically based. *Every pastor is responsible, for those whom he allows to misuse the “sacred reading desk.” A Pastor is to be very careful to whom he entrusts to speak behind the pulpit of the church. So, when I saw that young man, who worked for “ROC,” whom the pastor had invited behind the pulpit, it was not just what he said, but his behavior. He wouldn't do that if someone we consider greatly important in our culture were in his presence. He would change his behavior; which shows he really doesn't think that God is present in the ministry of His Word.*

“ROC” operated (Past tense; it no longer exists under that name) on the premise that it's the numbers and a “Social Gospel” that matter, and Slayton has bought into that. *But Paul told Timothy to “Preach the Word.” But not so, Rev. Slayton, who wants South Norfolk Baptist to “mirror” what happens at “ROC,” which also majors on worldly entertainment (like a “Fight Club” the “ROC” has started) and sinful practices. (The “ROC”: Richmond Outreach Center and its relationship to South Norfolk Baptist, is discussed on the webpage titled, “The Emergent Church”).* A pastor is to be above reproach (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus); how can Rev. David Slayton endorsed the “ROC” which had four pastors who



were found to have engaged in numerous scandals for years, and had to resign? A pastor is suppose to be in oversight over his flock; not subject the sheep of his congregation to the wolves.

It was recently observed that, since 2015, nothing has been mentioned about the “ROC” from the pastor....and for good reason: the “lead” pastor (aka Pastor “G”) was indicted on child abuse charges in Texas; 4 other “pastors” resigned, and the recently called new “pastor” who followed this turmoil, was fired in 2014, for trying to find out what had happened to the church, which was a reasonable question.

### **“Eisegesis” (and in some cases, “Narcigesis”) Preaching**

Because of his frequent absences, Pastor Slayton has frequently invited a theologically untrained “youth director” into the pulpit. An audit of some of his sermons reveals a Pentecostal flavor with an eisegesis of Scripture. (**Eisegesis**, pronounced: ī-sə-’jē-səs,): “the interpretation of a Scripture text by reading into it one’s own ideas”). (**Narcigesis** (noun) : a self-centered interpretation of biblical scripture; pastors who erroneously reading themselves into the biblical text, thereby diminishing the greatness of the truth of God’s Word).

His recent talk on *“Pursuing Persistent Worship”* is an example of inaccurate biblical interpretation, with a misunderstanding of the true worship of God, along with a professed dedication to Emergent Contemporary Music and reference to creating a “domino effect” in worship music. That was unscriptural. And stating that he would be willing to do the “Hokie Pokie” in church, if necessary, to worship, was totally inappropriate to say. His last illustration of trying to get to the church, during a hurricane, to “see God...to get peace of God in my mind...to ride by the church and see if anybody was there, so I could go in and start praying the storm out of my life...” shows an inadequate faith.

One does not have to be in a church building to see or seek God. (I know of one case in which a man, who was on his way to the a liquor store, in South Norfolk, stepped onto the porch of the church to get out of the rain, and, reading the inscription, with Scripture, returned home, and later found the Lord as his saviour. I have also watched my grandfather Read witness to a man who was intoxicated, on the street, in front of our parsonage).

Then, his invitation lacked a proclamation of the Gospel message: that all have “sinned and come short of the glory of God,” and need the salvation that only

Christ can offer. He only asked folks who were in storms to “stand by” God and everything would be all right. (Folks, that is not the Gospel message; that is part of the “prosperity gospel” message that Pastor Slayton has brought into the church).

### **Narcissistic Eisegesis**

Dr. Bruce A. Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, tells us about Narcissistic Eisegesis:

Here is a basic look at Bible interpretation over the 2000 years of church history. Even though this has been oversimplified I think it can help us understand what is happening today.

1. Orthodox - believes that the Bible is the word of God.
2. Liberal - believes that the Bible contains the word of God.
3. Neo-Orthodox - believes that the Bible becomes the word of God. (Seeker-Friendly, Emerging and Emergent)

The result of this Neo-Orthodox style of interpretation leads to **Narcissistic Eisegesis**:

**Narcissistic Eisegesis ("Narcigesis")** = Forcing the Bible to mean something you already want it to mean by superimposing yourself into the meaning of the passage, rather than interpreting Scripture for what it means about God, and letting the Scripture simply speak for itself. The key pointers are sermons where the pronouns I, me and my are prominent. In other words you hear mostly horizontal man centered messages instead of vertical God-centered messages.

Conversely, seeking to understand Scripture for what it reveals about God is known as Exegesis, and is also sometimes referred to as the "Literal" or "Grammatical-Historical" approach to interpreting Scripture. Example: The Narcissitic Eisegesis version of David and Goliath would be about you fighting your personal "giants" (i.e., problems, difficulties, setbacks, etc.). The Orthodox approach to interpreting David and Goliath would reveal, instead, an historical account of David's faith and God supernaturally intervening in an impossible situation for his own glory.

**“Eisegesis” Preaching, with “Calling Names of the Deceased” (“Name dropping”) in order to gain, or co-opt support, for his “Social Gospel” methodology**

Rev. Slayton stated in one sermon, that *“people come to church for community.”* That is a bogus statement to make, because it does not truly characterize what the church, as the body of Christ, is to be. I do not go to church for “community;” I do not go to be entertained; *I go to worship God.* Who are the “people” he is referring to? The pagan or the Christian? Did he not learn who should be involved in the Worship of God, in the seminary he attended? Perhaps

an examination of a more recent sermon, recounted below, will explain why he has been leading the South Norfolk Church in the direction it has been going, since his arrival as it's pastor. (SEE the webpage: "The church as a community" Heresy).

In another sermon, "*What are You Doing Here,*" the pastor Eisegetes the scripture passage about Jesus going up to the Temple with his parents (Luke 2:41f); using the scripture as a process of introducing his own presuppositions, agendas, and biases *into and onto the text*; interpreting the passage as an answer to the rhetorical question he posed, "Who would you go to find God's will for your life." After stating that Jesus asked the rabbis questions; i.e., (that He was asking what He did not know and needed answers); which is incorrect. (The correct interpretation of verses 46-47 is that the doctors were teachers who were scholars of the Mosaic law and Jesus amazed them with his brilliant scriptural understanding. Jesus listened to them and asked questions. The boy Jesus was utterly respectful taking the role of the student, but even at that young age, his questions showed a wisdom that put these teachers to shame. It is not a case of Him having to find His Father's will for His life, as Rev. Slayton implies; this was not a case of Him needing to learn from these teachers). But Rev. Slayton's answer for his listeners is: 'To be in the right place' among the teachers; to be with the leaders. Hang out with people with those who can teach us; this is not people who have done Christianity comfortable for years; but those who have carried the cross in their souls." He states that Jesus went to question those in the Temple in order to learn.?

Rev. Slayton then proceeds to state that he believes that Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, "Life Together" is, and I quote, "the best book of what the church should be about. (The best book of what the church should be about? What happened to the Bible? A book by a man, who was unsound theologically?) This is a man to learn from. This is not a man who practiced his faith in a nice air conditioned auditorium on a Sunday morning." (Yes, if you like liberal theology, but we will explore more on Bonhoeffer in a moment).

He then segues into complementing those who bring in the kids to church, working with them, etc.; *which is the sole focus of his social work programs for the church*. Then back to the scripture, Rev. Slayton has the scripture say, "He listened to these teachers," (i.e., God cannot use a prideful person). "He was asking them questions; which shows humility and intelligence." Then comes a digression into the life of a Jewish father's responsibility. The sermon is finished with the statement "How do I discern what to do?" Answer: "Get with the leaders; hang out with the right people." (He makes a good point about people who hang out with

the wrong crowd). “He needs to be your Saviour, not somebody else’s Saviour.” *(But he doesn’t tell you how He can be your Saviour).* His answer to folks who ask how to understand the Bible, is to “ask God to open your heart and mind.” (This leaves out Bible study and instruction, and personal evangelism witnessing; leaving it to the whim of the individual to “divine” what God would have them to do. For an example, see the story of Philip and the Eunuch who was reading from the book of Isaiah and asked Philip to interpret what he was reading; which eventually led to his conversion to Christ and subsequent baptism; see Acts 8:26-40).

Rev. Slayton now segues into scripture dealing with Jesus’ Resurrection appearance in Luke 24:45, concerning Jesus opening the disciples minds to “understand the Scriptures.” *He then misquotes Verse 49, by stating: ‘I’m sending the promise of my Father upon you, because I’m going to clothe you with power from on high.’ (The King James Version actually reads, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Or, in the New American Standard Version: “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” This verse is Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit; this is not saying that Jesus is going to ‘clothe everyone with His power.’)*

Slayton then says, “I don’t know what God wants to do with your life, but I know that He wants to open your mind to understanding and He wants to clothe you with power.” (This is, again, a misinterpretation of the scripture; *it is not about you having your mind open; it is not about you being clothed with power; it IS about His disciples, to whom He is speaking, there, in the Upper Room).* Slayton continued, “People see you, they will see the power of inner healing, the power of His Glory. You see, that is the reason Capt. Curling said, ‘God is still able,’ because when God clothes you with His power (what does that mean?), when He opens our minds to understanding Him, then we know that we know that we know.” His is misrepresenting the quotation, trying to make Capt. John say something or imply something that is not there in the original context.

In his closing prayer, he thanks God for “Capt.” John Curling, and for Dietrich Bonhoeffer. After the prayer, he says “that begins by following Jesus” (he doesn’t tell you how one becomes a Christian), “loving Jesus, and serving Him. In a moment I’m going to ask you to walk the aisle of this church if you haven’t already, and give your life to Him this day.” *(There is no instruction on why or how to confess one’s sins; how to accept Christ as one’s Saviour and Lord).* He

then closes inviting others to come for rededication, to join the church family, to surrender to the ministry, to have someone pray with you. This is an example of taking scripture out of context, and using it for one's own agenda, of the church doing social work; ignoring discipleship training, personal witnessing, Bible study, the true proclamation of the Word.

You can find this sermon online and listen for yourself; it is an example of Eisegesis and Scripture twisting. The fact that nowhere in the sermon or invitation, did he tell an individual exactly how to be saved, is telling. This is the typical pattern of "Seeker Sensitive" & "Church Growth" methodology, that ignores the Gospel message and plays the numbers game; and in this case, using the heresy of Bonhoeffer (which I will discuss in a moment) and the "prosperity gospel" message. You simply cannot ignore the Gospel message.

In several past sermons, where he Eisegetes Scripture, (recorded and stored electronically for reference), *he has mentioned members by name* (as referenced in the above description of that sermon) *from the pulpit, as if they, both living and deceased, could add influence to his firmly held "Seeker Sensitive" position, by this "name calling."* Let me say, that this co-opting of other people by publically calling their name, is a "no-no" in the pulpit. (The Merriam-Webster definition of "Co-opt": "to cause or force (someone or something) to become part of your group, movement, etc.; to use or take control of (something) for your own purposes.")

*One individual, who is now deceased, whom Slayton has mentioned on several past occasions, would be surprised; as I know from personal interview, that the individual was so incensed with the direction Rev. Slayton was taking the church, that they refused to allow their funeral to be held in South Norfolk Church.*

*I have come across several families in the past four years, who had had membership at South Norfolk for many years; with the same feelings; they didn't want him to conduct their loved one's funeral at South Norfolk Baptist. This is a disgrace; it is a tragedy, really. And it is a disappointment to me, as I knew each of these family members in question personally.*

He "name-dropped" again, in the above-referenced sermon, "*What are You Doing Here,*" mentioning **my own Father by name, and the booklet he wrote,** "Foundation Blocks in History," (written for a previous anniversary of the church); and then reading a quote from it by **John Curling:** "...we need to do some positive things for our young people...we need to expand our missionary work, provide

food for the hungry and starving,” saying all this (i.e., putting his own interpretation on what a deceased member has stated) to bolster his social work services programs (“Social Gospel”) in the community, to the neglect of proclaiming the Gospel, personal witnessing, and the expository preaching of the Word.

*(Expository preaching is the correct method taught in Southern Baptist Seminaries: **Exegesis**, the opposite of **Eisegesis**, is the exposition or explanation of a text based on a careful, objective analysis. The word exegesis literally means “to lead out of.” That means that the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text).*

If he had looked further in the booklet my father had written, he might have found this statement by Mr. A.W. Overton: “Preach the Gospel like it should be, the life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ. Never dress it up. Tell it like The Bible says.”

It’s like what I heard Brother Mac Brunson say in a sermon you can find on this website in the Audio section, “If you want to grow a church, you must preach the Gospel.” And he also has some words of warning for those who think that entertainment is the answer. And as recently as Fall of 2015, I heard him preaching one Sunday night and he mentioned why entertainment does not belong on a pulpit platform.

### **Mixing Philosophy and Religion: Using Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as a Role Model for Church Organization**

**(I have discussed this section on Bonhoeffer, with a conservative Lutheran pastor, who agreed with my assessment).**

A word is in order about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whom Rev. Slayton has publically admitted he admires, and, according to him, has read most of his books; *whom he believes has the right idea about what the church should be.* Yes, Bonhoeffer stood against the Nazi regime, but he had liberal ideas about how the church should be organized and run.

Remember that noble actions do not equal Christian behavior. Many noble people are not believers. Just because people perform noble deeds does not mean we ought to assume they are Christians. Rather, remember that while Bonhoeffer did courageously resist the Nazis, he also said some shocking things that people from various theological perspectives have taken to support their own positions. An examination of how Bonhoeffer used and interpreted Scripture reveals the true nature of his theology.

In an article, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer Rejected Classical Christianity,” David Becker investigates the writing of Bonhoeffer and states:

“I don’t mean to be critical of people, but I do want to speak the truth in love, and one of my pet peeves is when I see people, especially those who consider themselves to be, and present themselves as, theologically conservative, praise Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer espoused a so-called religion-less Christianity, and expressed doubt about God as a working hypothesis. He was a father of the so-called ‘death of God’ ‘fad’ of a few years ago. He wrote a lot and also wrote some things that sounded orthodox but he consistently had a low view of the Bible, considering a lot of it myth.” [1]

In reviewing one of Bonhoeffer’s books, Becker writes: “In his book, Christ the Center (1960, Harper & Row), Bonhoeffer wrote: ‘So if we speak of Jesus Christ as God, we may not speak of him as the representative of an idea of God who possesses the properties of omniscience and omnipotence (there is no such thing as this abstract divine nature!)’ (p. 108). **So Bonhoeffer didn’t really believe that Jesus is God. ... Bonhoeffer didn’t think that Jesus is sinless either.** ‘The assertion of the sinlessness of Jesus fails if it has in mind observable acts of Jesus. His deeds are done in the likeness of flesh. They are not sinless, but ambiguous. One can and should see good and bad in them’ (p. 113). ... So Bonhoeffer rejected classical Christology, had a low view of the Bible, denied the deity of Christ, doubted the virgin birth of Christ, denied the sinlessness of Christ, and doubted the physical resurrection of Christ.” [2]

Endnotes: [1] David Becker, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer Rejected Classic Christology,” *The Christian News*, June 5, 2000, pg. 7.

[2] Ibid.

This is why I made earlier reference to Rev. Slayton’s sermon, “What Are You Doing Here?” that his praise for Bonhoeffer is misguided. **Bonhoeffer did espouse heresy; and Rev. Slayton should never hold him up as an example,** although put into a Nazi prison, etc., (yes it is high sounding to talk about suffering for Christ’s sake), but Bonhoeffer’s philosophy is not the way to organize a church body.

**Let’s explore “The Cost of Discipleship” book, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.**

Bonhoeffer, who died because of his principles in a Germany concentration camp in 1945, is one of the most frequently quoted individuals by evangelical leaders. This has always surprised me given the fact that Bonhoeffer was a

Christian humanist with neo-orthodox leanings. Nevertheless, I decided to read for myself this, his most well known book.

Bonhoeffer's greatest contribution to the Christian community is his teachings on what he calls "cheap grace." "Cheap grace," he writes, "means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner" (p.46). In a statement that would strike a great blow against easy-believism of our day he says, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate" (p.47). To these thoughts, and the theology behind them, we say a hardy "amen."

On the other hand, in addition to his humanistic and neo-orthodox tendencies mentioned above, *The Cost of Discipleship* clearly revealed other major problems. Most disturbing of which is his belief concerning sacramental regeneration. Bonhoeffer takes the traditional Lutheran view that grace is dispensed through the sacraments of baptism (most often infant baptism) (pp. 254-262) and the Lord's supper (pp. 263-276). In other words, it is through these means that one is born again. Additionally he believes that a true Christian can lose his salvation (p. 329). These are grave errors that must be factored into any understanding of Bonhoeffer's teachings.

While Bonhoeffer supplies some thoughts worth considering, his false teachings are too many and too real to ignore.

Because Rev. Slayton says he has taken Bonhoeffer as his guide on how to "do church," it will be instructive, for the next few pages of this introduction, to examine further what the man believes.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a neo-orthodox German theologian, pastor, preacher, radio broadcaster, and prolific writer in the 1930s and early-1940s, during the rise, rule, and downfall of Adolph Hitler. He was greatly fascinated with neo-orthodox thought, theology, and terminology, and was greatly influenced by the major theologian of neo-orthodoxy, Karl Barth (1886-1968). Bonhoeffer's writings are credited with helping to father the "Death of God" theology which was popularized by the Anglican Bishop John A.T. Robinson in the decade of the 1960s. **Bonhoeffer was in reality a practical atheist and a religious humanist who denied virtually every cardinal doctrine of the historic Christian faith** (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, New York: Macmillan



Co., 1972, pp. 9-12).

**Bonhoeffer readily acknowledged "the debt he owes to liberal theology."**

Declaring that it was impossible to know the objective truth about Christ's real nature and essence, Bonhoeffer proclaimed that God was dead. Moreover, Bonhoeffer believed that the true Christian was the confessing believer who totally immersed his life in the secular world, becoming a secular Christian. Rejecting the objective unalterable moral standards of the Bible, Bonhoeffer proclaimed a situational ethics -- that right and wrong are determined solely by the "loving obligations of the moment" (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, New York: Macmillan Co., 1972, pp. 9-12, 378; *Ethics*, pp. 38, 186; *No Rusty Swords*, pp. 44-45).

The son of a Berlin professor of psychiatry, Bonhoeffer studied theology at Tübingen, Berlin and at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer, student chaplain and lecturer at the University of Berlin, joined the anti-Nazi pastors in the German "church struggle." In 1935, he was appointed head of the Finkenwalde Confessing Church Seminary, which was closed by the government in 1937. In 1939, Bonhoeffer rejected the possibility of a job in America, safe from the impending European war. He was convinced that he had to face the difficulties ahead with the Christians in Germany.

Back in Germany during World War II, Bonhoeffer was forbidden to preach or to publish. Though claiming to be a disciple of Gandhi and his credo of non-violence, Bonhoeffer worked as a double agent in the anti-Nazi resistance movement and in the German military office, and eventually joined the wartime conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. His arrest in 1943, however, arose from his direct involvement in smuggling fourteen Jews to Switzerland. He was hanged by the Nazis at Flossenbürg on April 9, 1945.

Although only 39 when executed, Bonhoeffer left a rich legacy of books, some of his best known being *Sanctorum Communio*, *Act and Being*, *The Cost of Discipleship*, and *Life Together*, as well as letters, papers, and notes published by his close friend and biographer, Eberhard Bethge. These include *Letters and Papers from Prison*, *Ethics*, and six volumes of collected writings (Dr. Ruth Zerner, City University of New York, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer," *Eerdmans' Handbook To The History of Christianity*, 1977, p. 603).

Although Bonhoeffer presented his own strain of neo-orthodox existentialism, many evangelicals have been taken in by his warm-hearted piety and by his high sounding devotion to Christ and call to suffer for His sake. His religious terminology may appear to be evangelical, but its substance was existential. Yet, there are those today who continue to present Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a genuine Christian hero (e.g., [Don Matzat](#), [Chuck Colson](#), and the editorial board of *Christianity Today*). Grand Rapids Baptist College ([GARBC](#) -- now Cornerstone College) scheduled a play in the fall of 1991 which extolled Bonhoeffer's memory.

The following is a summary of beliefs and influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as taken from some of the over 14 books and documents attributed to him:

1. He believed that "God is teaching us that we must live as men who can get along very well without Him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us." Bonhoeffer also believed that the concept of God as a "supreme Being, absolute in power and goodness," was a "spurious conception of transcendence," and that "God as a working hypothesis in morals, politics, and science ... should be dropped, or as far as possible eliminated" (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, S.C.M. Press edition, Great Britain: Fontana Books, 1953, pp. 122, 164, 360).
2. He believed that mankind had become of age and no longer needed religion, which was only a deceptive garment of true faith; he suggested the need for a "religionless Christianity." To Bonhoeffer, "the Christian is identified not by his beliefs, but by actions, by his participation in the suffering of God in the life of the world" (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, S.C.M. Press edition, Great Britain: Fontana Books, 1953, p. 163). Thus, Bonhoeffer's final writings have given impulse to Marxist theologians sponsoring "liberation theology" and to others wishing to promote a worldly social gospel.
3. He refused to discuss the origin of Christ, His relationship to the Father, His two natures, or even the relationship of the two natures. Bonhoeffer was adamant in his belief that it was impossible to know the objective truth about the real essence of Christ's being-nature (*Christ the Center*, pp. 30, 88, 100-101).
4. He questioned the Virgin Birth, and in reality denied it (*The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 215).

5. He denied the deity of Christ; he advocated that "Jesus Christ Today" is not a real person and being, but a "corporate presence" (*Testimony to Freedom*, pp. 75-76; *Christ the Center*, p. 58).
6. He denied the sinlessness of Christ's human nature and further questioned the sinlessness of His earthly behavior (*Christ the Center*, pp. 108-109).
7. He believed that Christ exists in three "revelatory forms" -- *as* Word, *as* sacrament, and *as* church. From asserting that Christ *is* the church, he followed that all persons *in* the church are *identical with* Christ (*Christ the Center*, p. 58; *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 217). This amounts to pantheism!
8. He believed that Christianity is not exclusive, i.e., that Christ is not the only way to God (*Testimony to Freedom*, pp. 55-56).
9. He was a prominent figure in the early ecumenical movement, as evidenced through his associations with the "World Alliance for International Friendship" (a forerunner of the apostate World Council of Churches [WCC]), Union Theological Seminary, and Visser 't Hooft (who later became the first General Secretary of the WCC) (*Testimony to Freedom*, pp. 22, 212, 568). Bonhoeffer also reached out to Roman Catholics, prefiguring the broader ecumenism that blossomed after Vatican II in the mid-1960s.
10. He was a practical evolutionist (*No Rusty Swords*, p. 143), and believed that the book of Genesis was scientifically naive and full of myths (*Creation and Fall: A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3*).
11. He adhered to neo-orthodox theology and terminology concerning salvation (*Testimony to Freedom*, p. 130), was a sacramentalist (*Life Together*, p. 122; *The Way to Freedom*, pp. 115, 153), believed in regenerational infant baptism (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, Macmillan, pp. 142-143) as well as adult [baptismal regeneration](#) (*The Way to Freedom*, p. 151), equated church membership with salvation (*The Way to Freedom*, p. 93), and denied a personal/individualistic salvation (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, Macmillan, p. 156).
12. He placed little or no value on the Old Testament -- "... the faith of the Old Testament is not a religion of salvation" (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, S.C.M. Press edition, Great Britain: Fontana Books, 1953, p. 112).

13. He denied the verbal-plenary inspiration of Scripture, believing that the Bible was only a "witness" to the Word of God and becomes the Word of God only when it "speaks" to an individual; otherwise, it was simply the word of man/men (*Testimony to Freedom*, pp. 9, 104; *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 161). To Bonhoeffer, the Bible was meant "to be expounded as a witness, not as a book of wisdom, a teaching book, a book of eternal truth" (*No Rusty Swords*, p. 118). He also believed in the value of higher criticism/historical criticism, which is a denial of the inerrancy and authenticity of the Bible (*Christ the Center*, pp. 73-74).

14. He had no faith in the physical resurrection of Christ. Bonhoeffer believed the "historicity" of the Resurrection was in "the realm of ambiguity," and that it was one of the "mythological" elements of Christianity that "must be interpreted in such a way as not to make religion a pre-condition of faith." He also believed that "Belief in the Resurrection is not the solution of the problem of death," and that such things as miracles and the ascension of Christ were "mythological conceptions" as well (*Christ the Center*, p. 112; *Letters and Papers from Prison*, S.C.M. Press edition, Great Britain: Fontana Books, 1953, pp. 93-94, 110).

### **Introducing Heresy into Preaching and Teaching (Unintentionally or Uneducated?)**

It was first apparent to me, in 2013, that Pastor Slayton was preaching the "Name it--Claim it" false theology of the "Prosperity Gospel," in the pulpit, on the occasion of the 120th Anniversary of South Norfolk Baptist Church. *It later came to light that he had actually taught this book on Wednesday nights, starting in January 2012. He has not stopped believing this Heresy: he "doubled down" and endorsed it AGAIN, during a sermon on January 4, 2015.*



But, it was on the occasion of the 120th Anniversary of the church, Pastor Slayton, in his sermon, where I first heard him endorse "The Circle Maker" book, which had been previously used at South Norfolk under his guidance. He has

obviously not vetted the heresy of Mark Batterson.

I didn't know what "The Circle Maker: Praying Circles around Your Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears," nor the author Mark Batterson was about, until I heard that South Norfolk Baptist was using it earlier this year; then, 14 minutes into his sermon, Pastor Slayton endorsed this heretical concept of prayer, in the pulpit, on the occasion of the 120th Anniversary of the church. It is now known that some of the pastors in the Bridge Network of Churches (formerly called the Norfolk Baptist Association) got together to study this heretical book. This is not a commentary on Rev. Slayton as a person. Yet in a January 4, 2015 sermon, he "doubled down" and endorsed this heresy again.

It was interesting that in a "Sheep Beating" sermon, March 29, 2015, that had not one mention/emphasis of Palm Sunday, but, with more "Sheep Beating" of those he considered to oppose his "Vision Cast" for the future demise of the church, he mentioned again an earlier pastorate at First Baptist, Galax, Virginia, where at age 30, he stated "he didn't know what to do;" but failed to mention his short tenure there, his already admitted disagreements with the Deacons, in a previous sermon; also that that church had ordained a woman as a pastor, which goes against what is taught in the Bible; and the intentional interim that, later on, had to pick up the pieces. He further stated that social media could be used to "grieve the Holy Spirit" if it was critical of what was happening in a church. Let me say frankly, that preaching heresy and tolerating liberalism in a church, should always be addressed. Preaching heresy is "grieving the Holy Spirit." And any pastor who openly preaches heresy.....who "doubles down" on the same heresy with more endorsement of the same, will one day stand before the Lord and give an account of it.

Mark Batterson, "lead pastor" of National Community Church in Washington, D.C., made his debut in Christian publishing with "In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day" and followed that up with several other titles, including "The Circle Maker." He is part of the "Emergent" Church movement.

"The Circle Maker" finds its title and inspiration in Honi Ha-Ma'agel, a Jewish scholar who lived in the first century B.C. and who is described in the Talmud. The book's examples and illustrations are largely drawn from his own life, from the dreams, goals and desires that he has seen fulfilled. He speaks of drawing a large circle around an area of Washington by walking around it while praying; before long he had a successful and growing church within that circle.

Batterson writes about circling a building he wanted for his church, (much like David Slayton claimed he did, walking around the church at South Norfolk Baptist, before he "applied" for the position as Pastor) marching around it, laying hands on it, even going barefoot on its 'holy ground,' until it was his.

But, God is not a "Let's-Make-A-Deal" God; He doesn't work that way. I am not a legalist, but the book is not only silly, it's not based on Scripture. It's absurd, and an insult to people who have heard, read, or studied Scripture.

Mark Batterson teaches "a new way" of praying, and he presents a "new gospel." It's a Gospel Jesus did not preach. It's a Gospel the Apostles did not preach. It's a Gospel the Old Testament Prophets did not preach.

**“The Circle Maker” author, Batterson, changed a Bible verse in Habakkuk, which is one example of the heresy and Scripture twisting in his book:**

Where is the Fear of the Lord? Maybe there is an explanation for this, but it appears heretical. We do not change His words. Period.

The following article is from the “Beginning and End” website. The article is *“The Circle Maker Heresy–Witchcraft In The Church.”*

Here is Batterson once again citing Honi as the model for prayer in a Christian’s life:

“I’m sure Honi the circle maker prayed in a lot of different ways at a lot of different times. He had a wide variety of prayer postures. But when he needed to pray through, he drew a circle and dropped to his knees. His inspiration for the prayer circle was Habakkuk. He simply did what the prophet Habakkuk had done: **“I will stand upon my watch, and station me within a circle.”** (Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker*, p. 157) [bold mine]

Once again, it is Honi that is the basis for this book (not Joshua at Jehrico, which was just one example in the book). And Batterson now goes into the mind of Honi to explain his inspiration (where he obtained this information is unknown). And he quotes Habakkuk 2:1 (with no verse citation) to try and support his speculation about what inspired Honi. Here is Habbukuk 2:1 from the King James Version:

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.”

(Habakkuk 2:1).

Notice the problem here? The verse **does not say “circle.”** The Hebrew word for tower, *matsowr*, means *a rampart, watch tower or defensive entrenchment*. Even in the NIV, the most popular modern version, the verse reads “*rampart*.” A simple search of all the modern Bible versions will show that **none of them** used the phrase “station me within a circle.” Yet Batterson **added that to The Word of God**, just to promote the fable of Honi, and **the circle-making ritual, which have no connection to the Bible whatsoever**. Even if Honi was inspired by this verse from Habakkuk, why does it matter for a believer? Honi was *not* a prophet of God. So again, Batterson’s teachings are going to man-made ideas and not God-breathed, divinely inspired Scripture. **This is heresy** and the Bible says this of preachers who teach in this fashion:

**“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” (Romans 16:17).**

### **Who is Mark Batterson, endorsed by David Slayton from the Pulpit of South Norfolk Baptist Church?**



Mark Batterson was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and grew up in Naperville, Illinois. Mark is married to Lora, and they moved to Washington, DC in 1994 to direct an inner-city ministry. Batterson earned a Bachelor's degree from Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri and has two Masters Degrees from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, Illinois. Starting in 1996, Batterson has served the as lead pastor of National Community Church in Washington, D.C. National Community Church was recognized as one of the “Most Innovative and Most Influential Churches in America by Outreach” Magazine in 2008.[1]

As if being a pastor is not busy enough, Batterson in true *emergent* style, tries to cast his fame and exceeds his pastorate position by authoring multiple books, including us *In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day*, *Wild Goose Chase*, and *Primal: A Quest for the Lost Soul of Christianity*. His latest and most erroneous writing is *The Circle Maker: Praying Circles Around Your Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears*, which hit book stores this last December 2011. Seems to me if he would spend less time writing and more time being a pastor he may be a better pastor, but that would go against the Emergent Pastor protocol to actually feed the members of their church.

Mark Batterson is your typical “Emergent” “Seeker Friendly” pastor, by which, if you mean typical by the **way he commandeers Scripture and twists it to mean what it is not. Batterson is guilty falling into the trap that most “Emerging” Pastors fall into; the pit of narcissistic eisegesis. That is, (like David Slayton), reading oneself into biblical text; that has nothing to do with that person, situation, or church. (Like David Slayton), his typical Sunday message resonates more about social justice and biblical obfuscation, than actual solid exegesis of biblical Scriptures.**

When preaching, he is guilty of what is called “Long Law” preaching. In other words he is preaching more on the Law, making the Law take the place over the Gospel. This can be seen in many of sermon series, including in his most recent one entitle “IF” which can be found at <http://goo.gl/epdsS>.

This sermon series is base on “IF” you do these certain things, then God will... The use of the word “IF” turns God’s love in these sermons to conditions based on our obedience to Him in order for Him to love us. **This is not the Gospel neither is this the truth of God’s Word. This is Heresy, with a Capital “H.”** Let’s be clear about this: God’s love is **not** dependent on us, and what we do. God has foreknown His elect before time; Romans 8:28. If this were the case, there would be no Grace. Batterson’s “IF” series violates the very tenants of Scripture and teaching on what the Grace and unconditional love of God is. It is the old “Prosperity Gospel” of “Believe and Receive.” (This is the Heresy that Joel Osteen teaches).

The Apostle Paul carefully lays out how we as New Testament Christians are to handle the Law, while addressing the Galatian church in Chapter 3 of the book of Galatians. Paul says the following:

**Galatians 3:10-29**

King James Version (KJV)



**10** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

**11** But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

**12** And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

**13** Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

**14** That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

**15** Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

**16** Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

**17** And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

**18** For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

**19** Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

**20** Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

**21** Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

**22** But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

**23** But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

**24** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

**25** But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

**26** For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

**27** For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

**28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

**29** And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

As you tell from the Apostle Paul's writing, the way we are to handle the Law as New Testament Christians, is not the way Mark Batterson handles it or preaches how to handle it, from his pulpit.

**Batterson is also guilty of associations with New Age mystics and teachings,** and openly supports their writings and philosophies, which would explain a lot of his new age philosophies and principles in his preaching at NCC and in his books.

Back in April of 2008, Mark Batterson, pointed readers on his website to *Eckhart Tolle*, a New Age guru, who is has been heralded by Oprah Winfrey. **Batterson says that Tolle's book, *Practicing the Power of Now*, is "instrumental in the way I think about life."** His public reading list also includes several other New Agers and mystics: Jack Canfield, Daniel Goleman (The Meditative Mind), Gary Thomas (Sacred Marriage, Sacred Pathways), Leonard Sweet, Tony Jones, Brian McLaren, along with several others. **(This is the same Mark Batterson that David Slayton has endorsed by saying Batterson's book, "The Circle Maker is one of the best he has ever read on prayer!" Emphasis mine).**

In another, typical almost now comical, "Emergent" swagger, Batterson violates one of the basic characteristics of being a pastor, that is to be above reproach as found in 1 Timothy 3:2 and in Titus 1:7. According to Rev. Ken Silva, Southern Baptist pastor-teacher and author of *Apprising Ministries*, in his article entitled *"THE COMMENTS THAT MARK BATTERSON DOESN'T WANT YOU TO SEE"* Batterson when questioned by Silva in a blog comment, erased the questioning and called Silva a "Pharisee". The full article can be found at <http://goo.gl/dKc5G>. This thus proving that Batterson believes he is above reproach. (Slayton, who obviously has read this webpage, "Worship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," has later to be found to have adjusted the SNBC website accordingly, when he was called out over some heresy; i.e., see the comment in this paper concerning the so-called "January Bible Study" book used at the church.)

This type of attitude as seen above is typical of not only Batterson, but also many of his *emergent* cohorts. This type of "don't touch the visionary" leadership can not only be found at Batterson's National Community Church, but many other "seeker friendly" churches **that elevate the pastor over the Word of God to the level of ruler of the church. This explains why David Slayton has ignored constructive criticism from many of the members; many who have left the church....or no longer attend.**

One way of achieving this is to use “multi-site” locations like used at NCC (National Community Church). Multi-site locations, if you are not familiar with them, are when you have one church and with one pastor that is simulcast to multi locations thus making many little “churches”. In this set up, you have one pastor that “leads” all locations, and, with no pastors at those other locations, thus leading to a figurative CEO Pastor figurehead that has reign over all sites and power. This type of “site control” allows complete control over each site, and thus allowing that one pastor to project his “vision” of what the church should be to everyone without a challenged. This use of “multi-site” campuses can lead to a dangerous a style of pastor worship in which what the pastor say and what his “vision” calls for supersedes what the Bible teaches. Batterson seems to make use of this “multi-site” style a preaching with much effectiveness. (This is the heresy of “Vision Casting.”)

Over all Batterson is your typical “vision casting,” "seeker friendly" oriented pastor that follows the leads of his special “vision” from God that trumps the written Word of God. If you are attending his National Community Church in DC or any of it’s multi-sites, be very leery of Batterson and his teachings and promotion of Law over Gospel. While the Law is good for showing us our sins it won’t save you only preaching Christ died, buried and resurrected, in other words the Gospel will save you. Preaching the Law all the time will only leave you entrenched in your sins.

[1] America’s 25 Most Innovative Churches of 2008

[2] Chase The Lion

[3] Wild Goose Chase

[4] Primal

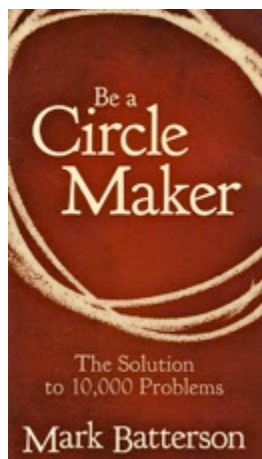
[5] The Circle Maker

[6] <http://evangelists.wordpress.com/2008/04/02/erwin-mcmanus-awaken-2008-speaker-promotes-eckhart-tolle/>

(Comments in “blue” emphasis mine.)

## “Be a Circle Maker?”

by Glenn E. Chatwick



“Since I buy books from Zondervan for our book table ministry, they will send catalogues and other stuff. Last month included with the catalogue was a little booklet by Mark Batterson titled, *Be A Circle Maker*.

“I had never heard of this author before but the title bothered me a bit. I put the booklet in my “to read” pile and left it there until this past Saturday when I took it with me for something to read while my wife was having her drum lesson. (It took less time to read than I thought, and I ended up with time to look at the heresy in the library of the Presbyterian Church, USA church in which we meet!)

“There was much that bothered me about this book, not the least of which were the many assertions by Batterson about what God thinks. The very first paragraph of chapter 2 had this statement: “God isn’t offended by your biggest dreams or boldest prayers. He is offended by anything less. If your prayers aren’t impossible to you, they are insulting to God.”

“Oh really? He gave no biblical support for this claim, which sounds much like some Word of Faith nonsense. How about an example: Let’s say I have a performance where I want to do a really good job; is it impossible for me to do? No. So, if I pray that the Lord will help me to relax and concentrate so as to do a good job, is that insulting God? I don’t see anything in Scripture which makes that claim.

“Next we have this on p.20: “There is nothing God loves more than keeping

promises, answering prayer, performing miracles, and fulfilling dreams. That is *who* He is. That is *what* He does.” This is a mighty presumptuous statement about knowing the mind of God. Of course keeping promises is part of the attribute of God in which He cannot lie. And He may answer prayer with “no.”

“Now, what about “performing miracles” or “fulfilling dreams”? If God really loved nothing more than these, then why does God not perform miracles for everyone all over the world? If God really loves nothing more than fulfilling dreams, then why are not all the dreams of His followers fulfilled? Again, this sounds very much like the claims of the Word of Faith heresy.

“Batterson follows this presumption at the bottom of p. 20, continuing to the top of p.21 with: “you are only one prayer away from a dream fulfilled, a promise kept, or a miracle performed.” Questions: what about those Christians in Somalia dreaming of living in freedom and being out of poverty - do all they have to do is pray about it and then God will fulfill it? What promise has God made to believers which require a prayer to fulfill? What if no matter how much you pray for a miracle God responds with “No”? This teaching so reeks of Word of Faith!

**As I progressed on page 21, I came across this little gem: “Prayers are prophecies.” Wait a minute - Run that pig by me again! Yep, Batterson says, “Prayers are prophecies.” Then he follows this with, “Ultimately, the transcript of your prayers becomes the script of your life.” I wonder where Batterson finds this nonsense in Scripture!?!**

“Now what is amusing is that on the very next page Batterson says, “God is not a genie in a bottle, and your wish is not His command.” But didn’t he just say they were prophecies? Hasn’t he said you are only one prayer from having a dream fulfilled? Those statements certainly sound to me like he is saying God *is* a “genie in a bottle.”

“Beginning on p.24 Batterson tells us of a “prayer walk” during which he claimed the promise God gave to Joshua about the land the people of Israel were about to inhabit. He said he felt that, just as God had transferred to Joshua the promise which He had made to Moses, that God would transfer the promise to Batterson if Batterson “had enough faith to circle it.” Therefore, Batterson took a long prayer walk around an area in Washington, DC, which was “the biggest prayer circle I’ve ever drawn” as he completed the 4.7 mile walk. And now he has several campuses as part of his church. (As an aside, he said his feet were sore after that walk - what, the guy isn’t used to walking!?! Only 4.7 miles and his feet are sore!?!?!)

“In Batterson’s end notes on this particular teaching, he states, “Notice that the promise was originally given to Moses. The promise was transferred to Joshua. In much the same way, all of God’s promises have been transferred to us via Jesus Christ.”

“There is a really big problem with this statement. First, the promise to Moses was for Israel, and Joshua just inherited the promise for Israel as their new leader. Secondly, it is extremely poor teaching to say that “all of God’s promises have been transferred to us.” There are many, many promises in the O.T. which were for specific people, for Israel as a Nation, etc. Only if a promise was given which would include Christians can we claim the promise for ourselves. Too often Christians abuse Scripture by claiming a promise for themselves which was never intended that way. A few perfect examples are the horrible abuses of [Jeremiah 29:11](#), [2 Chronicles 7:14](#), and [1 Chronicles 4:9-10](#), all of which I’ve written on.

“I think the main idea of this booklet, and the whole “prayer circle” teaching is summed up at the bottom of p.45 to the top of the next page: “If you’ve never had a God-sized dream that scared you half to death, then you haven’t really come to life. If you’ve never been overwhelmed by the impossibility of your plans, then your God is too small. If your vision isn’t perplexingly impossible, then you need to expand the radiuses of your prayer circles.” I don’t know about you, but I find this claim to be highly presumptuous.

“While reading the booklet, I understood the idea of drawing a circle around things for which to pray as being figurative, but then I found [this video](#) while searching the ‘net to find information about Batterson. In this video, he says “If you draw the circle, God will multiply the miracles in your life.” So Batterson has decided that by drawing a circle around whatever it is you are praying for, then God will “multiply miracles in your life” - the “genie in the bottle” which Batterson decries! Batterson *does* draw literal circles on the ground. Then he contradicts himself by saying one must pray even when we don’t get the answer we want!!! Wait a minute - I thought praying in a circle guaranteed your prayer would be answered! After all, aren’t prayers “prophecies” - and don’t prophecies have to come true?

“I found an excellent analysis of this video at ["Pilgrim's Light Ministries."](#) It would be well worth your reading to be informed on such unbiblical teachings.

“So I have one BIG question: Where do we find this teaching in the Bible; where do we find people drawing mystical circles and God “multiplying miracles” for

people doing so?

“I had never heard of Mark Batterson previous to receiving this booklet, so I “googled” him and discovered that he is just another “seeker-sensitive/purpose-driven” pastor of a mega church with several campuses. An excellent [example of a report](#) from Apprising Ministries examines how Batterson responds to his critics. The post also demonstrates that Batterson’s poor hermeneutical approach to Scripture is not new.

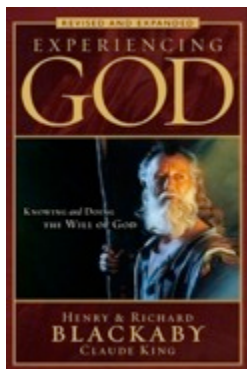
“Only in this westernized, wealthy, hedonistic culture will you find people teaching all these gimmicks about prayer (remember the “Prayer of Jabez”?). While Christians in the Islamic world are being martyred on a daily basis, pastors like Mark Batterson sell gimmicks to gullible Christians who think God just has to be manipulated in the right way.”

### **Eisegesis and Endorsement of "Experiencing God" Heresy, in the sermon at SNBC, "A Praying Hero" (Colossians 4:12) Sept 9, 2014**

**"Experiencing God" is a book that is full of errors, Biblically unsupportable assertions, incredible statements, and story-theology (views based upon anecdotal accounts rather than upon Scripture).**

(This is not about the Blackabys, but about the view they advocate in this book. It is not about anything else they've ever written or done, nor is it about them as Christians or men; it is also not a commentary about Rev. Slayton as a person).

**Rev. Slayton stated:** “In 26 yrs. as a pastor, I’m often asked, how can I know the will of God? There was a great study that came out years ago, “Experiencing God.” It was all about knowing and experiencing the will of God.”



David Slayton **is AGAIN endorsing heresy, this time in Blackaby's "Experiencing God" study. Again, like his endorsement of Bonhoeffer, he is clearly showing his philosophy of ministry, and it is unbiblical.**

Like most wrong views of divine guidance, the Blackabys' scheme is wrong from the outset because it fails to give proper emphasis to the doctrine of divine Providence. In the Blackaby system, faith in the goodness and reliability of Providence is replaced by fortune-cookie thoughts generated by one's own imagination--or perhaps by that tainted hot dog you bought from a street vendor.

I noticed in his short sermon series on "Obscure Servants," that he is Eisegeting his ideas into what a church member ought to be and do; that these "Obscure Servants," represent what the members of a congregation should be like, whom he wants, to support his agenda. By twisting the scripture out of context, he is "mapping onto" these Bible characters; those characteristics of what he thinks a church member should be like.

Rev. Slayton has, on at least three occasions, in recent sermons, used "props" to illustrate his points, like that bag of garbage that was "in the back of the choir loft," or the young convert, he ushered to the platform to sit in a chair, while he berated and brow-beat the congregation, on how to connect with people, through the "eyes, body language," etc. (Where do you find that in the Bible?)

Consider the statements he made in the sermon, "A Praying Hero":

"God has already given me a lot of hints about what His will is." ("Hints" about what His will is? That is not Biblical. Hints? From God?) He says, "pray that you become satisfied with the will of God for your life. Satisfaction comes after obedience." Now watch the segue or transition, from the individual church member, into the church membership as a whole:

"The quickest way to lose the Spirit of God in our midst is to reject His purpose." (He has transitioned with the words "in our midst" to mean the church body. Who determines "His purpose?") "It's the same thing for churches." (I knew this was coming: all these recent sermons focus on the South Norfolk congregation, and this pastor's viewpoint). "As the body of God in the church, we have to discern His will." (Who is "we"?) "Sometimes we don't really want to know His will because we have a suspicion what His will is going to be, and when God begins to say this is how I want to use you as a church, and you say, that is not how we want to be used as a church, Lord, this is how we want to be used as a



church, this is not the way we want to be used as a church.” (You see where this is going? He is saying, in essence, that you, the church member, may not like where he, the pastor, is leading the church, but *he has divined it*, as God’s will, through “hints” for the church. Show me where that is in the Scripture.)

(Now comes the brow-beating/“Sheep Beating”):

“Do you know what happens when that happens? We get real miserable as the people of God. We complain, we gripe, we criticize” (what is he doing? Criticizing)..... “nobody wants to come into the church, because we’re in such a bad mood all the time. We’re rebelling against what God is saying.” (No, people are upset with where the pastor is leading the church; what the pastor is saying in response to being rightly questioned by the members, on where he is leading the church. How did we get from the “Praying Hero” to people complaining in church)?

“The quickest way to lose the Spirit of God in our midst, is to reject His purpose.” (But *who* determines God’s purpose? *Where does the Bible say that*)?

“Now God takes individuals and He takes churches through seasons. We have to recognize the season and move with Him in the season.” (I don’t know what it is about many charismatic pastors using the terms “shifting” and change of “seasons.” *But this is where the shift or transition occurs in this sermon.* We don’t base Christian doctrine on your feelings or your experiences. We base them on the written Word of God. This is *the set up* for where this sermon is headed. Who determines the “season?” I don’t find this rationale in the Bible).

Now watch this: “...and when God begins to say ‘this is how I want to use you as a church’...” (WHO determines what God is saying and how He wants to use each member of a church? Or how the church should be organized? The pastor? What does the Bible say? Is he using the Blackaby methodology? Is he “Vision Casting?” “God is saying... {to South Norfolk Baptist Church}” is not in the Bible)!

Like most wrong views of divine guidance, the Blackabys' scheme, referenced above, is wrong from the outset, because it fails to give proper emphasis to the doctrine of divine Providence. In the Blackaby system, faith in the goodness and reliability of Providence is replaced by fortune cookie thoughts generated by one's own imagination--or perhaps by that tainted hot dog you bought from a street vendor.

So, he has left the sermon's text: "Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12).....  
 .....and gone *into mind-reading what God is saying to the South Norfolk church...this is a stretch....and it's not what the original scripture is about...how do you go from Epaphras praying for Paul, to "...He takes you through seasons"?*

No, that's Eisegesis of scripture; scripture twisting; making the scripture say what the pastor wants it to say; not what it says, and actually means. Where does the Scripture say that Epaphras said that in his prayer for Paul?

He then transitions into the Observance of the Lord's Supper with these words: "Now why did Jesus give us the Lord's Supper? He gave us the Lord's Supper. They shared in the Lord's Supper together. Not as individuals, but together. Why did Jesus do that? Jesus was trying to say, that when you come to this table, you come as family. We come together." (He doesn't tell the significance of the Lord's Supper; only that Jesus and the Disciples observed it "together" which builds on his statements about the church as a "family." But nowhere in Scripture is this emphasized; he has missed the major point of the meaning and purpose of the Lord's Supper...it is not simply just about members coming together as a "family." What about the significance of the elements; the bread, the juice? Who is qualified to take the elements of the Lord's Supper? Anybody in attendance?)

**In the sermon, "A Loyal Friend" (Colossians 4:7-8) August 31, 2014, Pastor Slayton clearly Eisegeset, with two instances of scripture twisting:**

"Because the blood of Jesus connects us to one another, that more than anything else, holds us to each other. There is so much stupid, petty fighting that goes on between Christians and church members," (is he admitting that there is a problem in South Norfolk church?) "because we emphasize everything but the blood of Jesus Christ, that connects us to each other." (What does he mean "emphasize everything but..."? Because the church members are questioning where he is taking the church? This is apples and oranges; this is using the phrase "blood of Jesus Christ" in a wrong comparison. You simply cannot compare the "blood of Jesus Christ" with a member of the church who is questioning the pastor's own interpretation or vision, of where and what the South Norfolk Baptist church should be about).

“When I look at you and separate from you,” (why would he *separate* from you? Or why would a member *separate* from him or another?) “because you are different from you and our histories are different,” (he’s talking about his exclusive ministry to the young people from the projects) “and argue with you because you disagree over some issue, so we therefore can’t pray together, can’t work together,” (he’s saying you can’t agree with his vision of what South Norfolk church should be about) “we can’t journey together; what I have just said, that that is more important than the blood of the Son of God who connects us, and that’s about as close to blasphemy as you can get.”

(Sidebar note: How did he get from the sermon’s text: “All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; (Colossians 4:7-8) to accusing those who disagree with the pastor, of blasphemy? This is Eisegesis of scripture; and it is reading one’s own story or ideas into the text. That is not what the scripture text is about).

Wait a minute! He’s saying that because a member disagrees with him, “we therefore can’t pray together, can’t work together, we can’t journey together...” in other words, he’s saying that the member who is in disagreement with the pastor (him) is the same thing as saying that that is more important than the blood of the Son of God? And you’re calling it “blasphemy?” **That’s not in the Bible.**

UH?.....no.....how do you equate these two statements? And then to say, “...and that’s about as close to blasphemy as you can get.” That’s wrong....that is NOT blasphemy to be in disagreement. He has twisted the scripture. How does a disagreement with the pastor, become elevated to “blasphemy?”

Let’s consider what the dictionary says about this word:

**blas·phe·my:**

**noun: blasphemy; plural noun: blasphemies**

- 1. the act or offense of speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things; profane talk.**

**: great disrespect shown to God or to something holy**

**: something said or done that is disrespectful to God or to something holy**

**1: the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God**

## 2: the act of claiming the attributes of deity

### 3: irreverence toward something considered sacred or inviolable

Does he feel that disrespect that may arise out of a disagreement between him and some of the church members, is toward him personally? He is elevating this to “blasphemy?”

If we take the definition as it stands, I think this is a case of “calling the kettle black,” since there is now a “lack of reverence for God,” (according to item 1 in the above definition) in the church; and who brought the heretical entertaining “worship,” dancing, pool table, et.al. into the church? He did.

But he seems content to hammer the congregation with those scripture-twisted statements; to support his position, his “vision,” his goal for the church....and does not allow for any other member who wishes to give input. I understand that he has repeatedly rejected constructive criticism, given by several members in a loving way.

He then jumps from Colossians 4:7-8, to the book of Proverbs (he doesn't cite the reference, but he's quoting Proverbs 17:17) and makes this statement: “The Book of Proverbs says that a friend loves at all times. A brother is born for adversity. You see, I'm your brother, not only on the good days, but on the bad days.” (He has taken this verse out of context and twisted it *to mean that you're his brother...that means you're to love him/respect his position/his view of the church regardless.* What is the Bible really saying here?

Let's look at an authoritative commentary that examines the passage, Matthew Henry's Commentary, which is a trusted commentary on the Bible says: “Verse 17. No change of outward circumstances should abate our affection for our friends or relatives. **But no friend, except Christ, deserves unlimited confidence.** (Emphasis mine). In Him this text did receive, and still receives its most glorious fulfillment.”

Or consider the Pulpit Commentary, which states: “Verse 17. - A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Some find a climax in the two clauses, and translate the last as Revised Version margin, "And is born as a brother for adversity," the same person being meant in both members of the sentence. A real friend loves his friend in prosperity and adversity; yea, he is more than a friend in time of need - he is a brother, as affectionate and as trusty as one connected by the closest ties of relationship.”

Then Pastor Slayton says, “That’s why God brought me into your life. That’s why God brought us into each other’s lives. To walk through the tough days together.” (Wait a minute! “That’s why God brought me, pastor Slayton, into your life? That’s why God brought us into each other’s lives.”?? NO, that’s not why Pastor Slayton was brought into your life....to be a friend to the members of the congregation? Well, most ministers are friends of the congregation, but....that’s a misreading of the scripture. That’s not in the Bible. Does he not know the purpose of being called as a Pastor, and what his Biblical duties are? Yes, he should be your friend, as a matter of course, but he has twisted the scripture *to support his viewpoint and his vision, for the church*: you’re to be his friend, and support his vision; but that’s not why the Pastor was brought “into your life.”

Then he says: “Proverbs says, faithful are the wounds of a friend. Sometimes we have to speak truth into each other’s lives. Sometimes we have to correct each other; even discipline each other, and we’re not real popular when we do that.”

(He has jumped into Proverbs 27:6). Matthew Henry’s Commentary says this about that verse: “It is good for us to be reprov’d, and told of our faults, by our friends. If true love in the heart has but zeal and courage enough to show itself in dealing plainly with our friends, and reprov’ing them for what they say and do amiss, this is really *better*, not only than secret hatred (as Lev. 19:17), but *than secret love*, that love to our neighbors which does not show itself in this good fruit, which compliments them in their sins, to the prejudice of their souls. *Faithful are the reproofs of a friend*, though for the present they are painful as *wounds*. It is a sign that our friends are faithful indeed if, in love to our souls, they will not suffer sin upon us, nor let us alone in it.”

So, according to Pastor Slayton, we have to speak truth into “each others’ lives,” but, is it to be only a one-way conversation? The actual context of the verse is that of a family, a brother-to-brother or sister-to-sister relationship, for example, not a congregation, per se.

He later tells his listeners: “We want to walk into church and put on chap stick and kiss up to one another from the time we walk in until the time we walk out..... We have church groupies.” (We have “groupies?”)

Hmmmm... “...correct each other; discipline each other....”???? Yes, that sounds like he wants you to support him fully, or else you will be corrected; you

are being ‘corrected’ with the criticism in this sermon. And the comment about the “chap stick” is clearly a barb at those who have left the congregation, in my estimate, because of his rigid pastoral leadership, entertaining “worship” and the other nonsense going on.

**“Name Calling” and “Vision Casting” in Rev. Slayton’s sermon  
“A Refreshing Hero” (Philemon 4-7)**

The sermon includes some interesting comments: about not praying for someone because they get on your nerves, and: “I don’t believe in prayer. Don’t put your faith in prayer, but in God. Philemon is wallowing in prayer. Faith and love go together. Love for Him and for each other.” Again and again, he mentions the problem of complaining.

And then, (here it comes), *he “Name Calls” publically, in the pulpit*, (continuing the practice he used previously in other sermons; i.e., Capt John Curling, my Father, Jimmy Scott, Truman Close, etc.) now mentioning Ted Nance opening up every night for the Adult VBS week. *This is a theatrical device for bolstering one’s own position*, by calling out the names of church members, both living and deceased, *as if they could or would support his viewpoint*.....dead men can’t talk, and cannot respond... but if *he* only knew what some of those deceased individuals thought and told me personally, before they went to Heaven, especially about his “worship” entertainment and irreverent music, he wouldn’t be so quick to call out their names.

“Name Calling” is also a device used in this particular sermon “A Refreshing Hero”; using Ted Nance, as representative of what the pastor feels is a “cooperative” church member, one who supports his “vision” by being so helpful in opening up the church for the church meetings. (Compliments to the janitor or sexton of the church?)

He mentions “Paul casting a vision.” (*Paul is involved in Vision Casting? I don’t think so. Where is that in the Bible? I wasn’t taught that in seminary. Does this pastor believe in unbiblical “Vision Casting”?*)

How does he go from the sermon text: “Verse 4. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, 5. Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; 6. That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing, which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because

the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother” (Philemon 4-7).....to stating that the Apostle Paul “cast a vision?” Again, he has left the scripture and Eisegetically “read into” the scripture his own idea of Philemon, as being a model church member. He “Name Calls” one of the members in the congregation, as an example of one.

He then states: “There are the seasons when the leader cannot be there.” (What does that mean? *Also he makes reference to his “Interns.” Who are they and what are their responsibilities?*)

**A non-Palm Sunday sermon, March 30, 2015, with more “Eisegesis,” “Sheep Beating,” and misuse of scripture:**

In his March 30, 2015 sermon, that had no emphasis of Palm Sunday, but, with more "Sheep Beating" of those he considered to oppose his “Vision Cast” for the future demise of the church, he mentioned again an earlier pastorate at First Baptist, Galax, Virginia, where at age 30, he stated he didn’t know what to do. (I’m not so sure he knows what to do in South Norfolk.) (He previously stated in a sermon that he had disagreements with the Galax Deacon body; but has failed to mention his short tenure there, that the church had ordained a woman as a pastor {which goes against Scripture}; and the intentional interims that, later on, had to pick up the pieces). He further stated, in this March sermon, that social media could be used to "grieve the Holy Spirit" if it was critical of what was happening in a church. This is taking scripture out of context and reading yourself into the text.

Let me say frankly, that preaching heresy and tolerating liberalism in a church, should always be addressed. And preaching heresy is always "grieving the Holy Spirit."

And may I say, that any pastor who openly preaches heresy.....who "doubles down" on the same heresy with more endorsement of the same, will one day stand before the Lord and give an account of it! When you as a pastor say, "Thus saith the Lord," you had better make very sure that that is the Word of God. Only Scripture is to give us Biblical and Christian doctrine. Anything else is not on a par with Scripture, like "The Circle Maker," is heresy; and any pastor who pushes this, will, according to Scripture, stand before the Lord and give an account of that! And Church Member? You need to stand up for what is true and only Biblical! (Emphasis mine).

### **Some concluding thoughts about the previously mentioned sermons:**

In the old days, preachers would talk about “spanking the congregation” or “Sheep Beating” about some serious issue. But it was rarely done. When one preaches, as we say, “the whole counsel of God,” and is properly an expositor of the Word, and does not Exegete the scriptures by taking them out of context, there is enough to preach on without having to preach “topically” and twisting the scripture to say what he wants it to say, as he is doing in these sermons I have audited here.

I don’t know how long I would have been able to sit in a pew listening to these sermonette diatribes, that jump around from scripture to scripture, Sunday after Sunday; being harangued from the pulpit, simply because I didn’t agree with him and his “vision,” of what and where the church should be headed. To take scripture out of context to mean something else is a no-no. Calling names of people from the pulpit is a no-no. And people leaving because no one will “kiss up” to them? That’s simply not the case, as I have understood it.

Folks, may I say frankly, that there are very serious consequences of non-expository preaching to consider. “Exposit” is a verb that means, “to explain.” You start out with an objective text of scripture, not something outside of us. That truth bears authority and is incompatible with all other competing ideas. There is only one true revelation from God; everything else is a lie. 1 John 2:21: “No lie is of the truth.” It cannot be a lie and the truth.

It is the preacher’s responsibility to live that truth and to get people to understand that truth; take you into the scripture; get you to understand the truth, and thus, the essential truths to live your life. There are serious eternal consequences for a pastor who misquotes Scripture out of context.

### **Eisegesis, Sheep Beating, Hypocrisy, Misuse of Psychological Testing, and Vision Casting, in the sermon**

#### **“A Hero who made an Impact”**

By David Slayton, October 19, 2014

After listening to this sermon yesterday, I sat down this morning and my wife, and I read the following, in today’s reading in “Open Windows,” our Southern Baptist Convention daily devotional guide, for 20 October 2014, written by Mrs. Michelle Dickens, Life Center Director, Hope Church, Las Vegas, NV:



Monday, October 20

## Card Truth Versus Error

**Devotional Passage:** 1 John 4:1-6      **Read the Bible Through:** Jeremiah 35-36  
 2 Thessalonians 1

*We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. 1 John 4:6*

**H**ave you ever been in a conversation with someone who offered “godly” advice or insight, and something in your heart tightened up? It just did not seem to align with what you have been taught. If you know for certain the information is false, you can correct the error on the spot. If you do not, the moment can become awkward and uncomfortable. You smile and nod your head, waiting for the time to end so you can check the facts for yourself, as a Berean would.

John wrote this first letter of three to warn believers of the false prophets seeping into their churches, teaching what probably sounded a lot like “Jesus talk.” John told them, “[you] are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us” (v. 6, HCSB).

We do not ever have to grab onto the first thing we hear and believe it is true. When there is doubt, take the time to read God’s Word. Ask others you trust for godly wisdom. Seek God’s face in prayer. As a loving Heavenly Father, He will always answer.

*Father, let Your truth run deep in my soul so that  
I am always aware of truth versus error.*

(This is not a commentary on Rev. Slayton as a person).

With the scripture texts of Romans 16:1 and Proverbs 16:21, the pastor begins with an illustration of a piece of toast and either pouring vinegar or honey on it; then states,

“To discern between what is real and what is fake.

We don't discern what is rotten and what is good."

He briefly discusses Phoebe in Romans 16:1, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae," as an example of how a member of the church should act.

Then, he segues into Proverbs 16:21, "The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness." And discusses "Sweetness of speech." Vs. 23: "The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips." Vs. 24: "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body." He states, "Speaking gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. The wise of heart is called discerning; and the sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness. The power of it is that we speak into people's lives spiritual, emotional, and psychological health."

Then, touching again on the narrow focus of his entire ministry, he mentions talking to an unnamed community leader and what the individual told him about how young people are talked to in their families. He quotes Proverbs 21:23 and "says he's judicious with his speech; he's careful what he says and how he says it."

I found this statement rather interesting: "If you and I want to get people on our team, the issue is not just what we say, but how we say it. (That's true. And especially true of a pastor in a congregation.) People can't get anyone on their team. because they're throwing vinegar at them all the time, instead of honey. And if you go around throwing vinegar on people all the time, no one is going to want to be a part of your team. And if you go around with honey; I'm not talking about lying, I'm just talking about building people up, encouraging people; folks are going to want to be on your team. They are going to want to be a part of what you're doing and where you are headed." For three sermons I have listened to, previously discussed, ("A Praying Hero," "A Loyal Friend," and "A Refreshing Hero") Pastor Slayton has himself, been "throwing vinegar" into the congregation. May I ask, who's calling the kettle *black*? He needs to go back and listen to what he himself actually said, in those, and in this sermon, about Honey and Vinegar. Throwing Vinegar in a sermon is called in pastoral vernacular, "Sheep Beating," and this sermon is no different from the other three I previously audited. If I recognize this hypocrisy, surely other Christians in the congregation, if they are spiritually discerning, will recognize it.

Then back to Romans 16:2 "Take an inventory of what God has placed in

your life and then you will know how God wants to use you. The problem is that a lot of us have not taken that inventory. We don't really know what God has placed in our lives." He mentions the "Five Love Languages" inventory. Using Gary Chapman's "The Five Love Languages" (on Sunday nights) is primarily an inventory used for couples in counseling, which has been expanded for use in other venues.

*(The Purpose Driven guru, Rick Warren's website recently touted the use of "The Five Love Languages," to pastors with an article by Thom Rainer.) But, it is not the go-to resource for biblical discipleship training, nor is it something one would use to discover one's "Spiritual Gifts" or where both Christian and non-Christian, can see what the Lord has for them through His Word. It wouldn't surprise me at all, that pastor Slayton is on the email mailing list of Warren's "Pastors.com" website, which is Rick Warren's 'platform' for promoting his Seeker Sensitive/Church Growth agenda.*

With no "New Member Classes" at South Norfolk, it seems, though, that Pastor Slayton wants to use this psychological instrument to psychologically evaluate the members in his congregation. Perhaps he should read the "Anger" pamphlet on "The Five Love Languages for Churches" website. Then go back and listen to what he said about "throwing Vinegar," then compare that to the "Sheep Beating" he administered in several of his recent sermons.

**What you need to know about  
"The Five Love Languages" survey/inventory  
Rev. Slayton was using, as he announced, on Sunday nights:**

This program of "Five Love Languages" (created by Gary Chapman) works off of an in-depth survey of an individual's personal (Read: confidential) emotional/psychological health, which will not be confidential, if Rev. Slayton reviews the details of your submitted inventory/survey; UNLESS you give him PERMISSION in ADVANCE. He should also agree NOT to share the results with anyone else. If you participate, you need to agree to share with him and anyone else in a group setting, in advance. This is NOT like a church study course in the standard/typical sense of the word.

As former military Chaplain, I had one assignment as Director of a Family Life Center at the largest military medical training installation in the United States. I completed the Clinical Pastoral Education program at Walter Reed Army Medical

Center, with additional training at Bethesda Naval Hospital, and Howard University Hospital; and used the "Five Love Languages" program, in a confidential setting, with couples, in marital counseling, who agreed to the process. The results of their surveys were kept under lock and key.

I cannot imagine why Rev. Slayton wants to use this inventory, unless he wants to “get inside the minds” of his congregation under the pretense of "finding your spiritual gifts" (which this program IS NOT designed for; it is designed to discover one's emotional orientation in relationship to one's spouse; that's the primary purpose of the program. Period.) This is not something that should be taken lightly by those filling out the survey/inventory; for what they put down may be used in a way they may not intend; not being apprised up front of what is really going on, which I can only speculate about.

NOTE: in his sermon, "A Hero who Made an Impact," he mentioned, in addition to "The Five Love Languages," **the initials "INTJ" as an inventory.** IF he is using the INTJ instrument, be aware that that is a very serious psychological inventory (Myers-Briggs) that requires specialized training to give and interpret. (A short version can be taken online). Anyone taking it should be aware that the results of it should be kept confidential, and never shared with anyone who is not trained in that specifically. The Myers-Briggs and INTJ has absolutely nothing to do with a Christian's "Spiritual Gifts" in a church setting. If the pastor requests to see the results of anything you have done online or in person, he should agree, in writing, not to reveal any of the results. The Myers-Briggs instrument is very psychologically revealing. This is not something you would want to share with other members of the church in a group setting.

The Myers-Briggs (INTJ) is not typically found in a Southern Baptist Church, and it's the first time I've ever heard of a pastor using it with members of a congregation; **and certainly not for finding one's "Spiritual Gifts."** A pastor trained in "Five Love Languages" might use that particular survey with couples in pre-marital counseling in a confidential setting, **but not in a group setting under the rubric of finding one's "Spiritual Gifts."**

These inventories are often misused by church leaders who are trying to inspire Christians to serve and by those Christians who desire to serve the Lord. These various spiritual gift tests (combinations of interest and personality inventories) purport to reveal a Christian's particular spiritual gifts

The idea behind the inventories is the same as behind career tests—

personality traits and types match certain activities and preferences. Line up the traits, preferences, and activities and you end up with a possible career choice. **Such tests reduce spiritual gifts and service in the Body of Christ to career interest inventories and a job in the marketplace.**

Since those who create and promote such tests are copying the business world, they at least ought to follow the academic guidelines for validation. In none of these inventories have I seen anything resembling the minimum requirements needed for a statistically valid instrument specifically for "Spiritual Gifts." This pastor is looking to an unproven, *extrabiblical* instrument to determine God's will and God's call to service. However, the lack of statistical validity is not the most serious problem with using spiritual gifts inventories.

In essence such inventories deny the Apostle Paul's declaration in Scripture, that he was "made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power" (Ephesians 3:7). Was he made a minister "according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power" or by his natural personality traits and personal interests?

If people are following career-choice types of inventories to learn how to fit into the Body of Christ, they may be serving from the wrong power base (personality "strengths") and their own self-interests, rather than from the "effectual working" of God's power and from obedience to His will and plan.

While God may indeed use a person's natural talents for His service, He is not limited to that. Nor is He limited to using His children according to any pagan temperament type. He is sovereign and may sanctify natural talents into spiritual gifts. He may also curb the use of natural talents to prevent pride from swallowing the soul. He may also endue people with power that goes far beyond their natural abilities and inclinations. While people like to think that God used Paul because of his natural talents, Paul counted all that he was and had according to the flesh as "dung." He knew the power of the resurrection of Christ indwelling him for service.

How did the Church throughout the ages, from its inception, ever function without these inventories? Very well! Spiritual gifts were recognized and exercised totally without the help of the modern-day testing movement and the penchant to worship numbers. The gifts are spiritual, not mathematical! They cannot be identified by psychological instruments, except in the most superficial and

erroneous way.

I recommend against the use of all such tests and inventories that purport to identify spiritual gifts. While the Bible does not speak to the issue of such tests, it does warn us about following "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). Rather than using the ways of the world to identify spiritual gifts and callings, the New Testament believers resorted to prayer and guidance by the Holy Spirit.

A pastor may say that spiritual gift inventories are useful to get their people to serve. They use the devices to motivate people to become involved. However, to use an instrument that purports to identify spiritual gifts when there is a high probability for error, since there has been no validation of results, is unwise and misleading.

Truth is too important an issue in the Body of Christ. Furthermore, what happens when an inventory gives someone the idea that he can (yea, should!) serve in a particular way that would be detrimental to the Body of Christ? What if the person is aggressive and demands to hold a particular position based upon his test performance? Getting a high score on any gift is no reason for a person to be placed in a particular ministry, since there is no proven validity to the results.

Spiritual gifts inventories may lead people not only to serve in the flesh, but also to depend upon their natural "strengths" rather than on the Lord in the process of serving Him. There is also the danger of focusing on self and self's gifts rather than on the Lord who is the Giver of gifts. For both biblical and academic reasons, I strongly recommend against the use of all such spiritual gifts inventories.

**The bottom line about all this "Spiritual Gifts" testing:** Excuse me, but why is this pastor using psychological inventories to help members of the congregation discover their "Spiritual Gifts?" Those psychological studies have nothing whatsoever to do with a Christian's "Spiritual Gifts." Whatever happened to Bible study? Or specific Southern Baptist study courses designed to help a Christian grow in his walk with God? Why is he not Preaching the Word? Taking care of the flock? Following his Biblical job description in 1 Timothy and Titus?

## Understanding David Slayton’s use of the term “Spiritual Gifts” with his intended Psychological Testing:

BUZZ WORD	TRADITIONAL MEANING	MISLEADING MEANING	REAL MEANING
Spiritual Gifts	Special gifts that come from God and are bestowed upon individual believers for the edification of the body of Christ	Talents and skills that show up on psychological-style assessments and inventories that plug a believer into a program at church.	Possessing superior spiritual knowledge and abilities through external manifestations (signs & wonders) and/or behavioral demonstration (being “with the program” and achieving results).

Back to the sermon. He then shifted to “Some of you may be sitting here saying, well, pastor I already know how God wants to use me. We get into a pattern of how God has been using us and if we’re not careful, the pattern turns into a rut. I have found in my life that periodically that God changes it up (an athletic term). He never asks my permission. I don’t usually get a whole lot of signals that he’s changing it up. I notice that what I’ve been doing isn’t working well any more, (yes, what you’ve been doing has been detrimental to the cause of Christ, and you’re still “Sheep Beating”) and so I get frustrated, and I go to the Lord and say, ‘Lord what’s going on,’ and the Lord says, ‘It’s not that I’m not using you any more, God is saying, ‘I am going to use you in a different way.’ (Suddenly, God has given Pastor Slayton a new “vision” of how He wants to use Slayton? This is “Vision Casting” and it is nowhere to be found in the Scripture. Jesus DID NOT teach this!)

He continues, It has been a season change. I want you (the “vision is being “cast” for YOU, not him) to recognize it. A “Season of Change” is a phrase used by pastors who are into heretical “Vision Casting.” And as you discern a season change, you may realize that I am shifting up (Who is “I”? Is he speaking for God? Is he speaking for himself? Or is he transitioning this personal pronoun into “you” the member of the congregation?) in order to effect the season I put you in. One thing I’ve seen is that some people are very effective at one time in their lives, and down the road they’re not as effective as they used to be, and what do we do? We blame everybody else. Or we say, we’re out to pasture; God is not going to use me any more. I’m just going to have attitude or whatever. (Have “attitude”? Read: Some of the church members have “attitude,” so get over it and do what I say do.)

And what God is saying to us (Saying to “us”? or saying to You? Saying to the unsaved pagan present in the auditorium, or saying to the Christian in the service?) is, ‘My Kingdom is moving all the time, my Kingdom is dynamic and creative, and what I want you to see is that yes, I used you effectively in a certain way, but the season has changed and I’ve taken you to a new time and new

ministry, and I'm changing it up a little bit. I'm changing your gifting up a little bit. I'm changing up who you are a little bit. You need to recognize that. You need to move with me in that. (God told him this? That you, the congregation need to "move with me" (God) in that? It sound's like he is interpreting what God is saying to him, and thus, to the membership. This is "Vision Casting.") If you don't (He continues to speak "*ex cathedra*" as if he is God, or God's mouthpiece, talking to you) you're going to sit here and get more frustrated, you're going to get burned out and have attitude, ("have attitude" is one of his favorite phrases) instead of saying, 'Lord help me move with you. (Did the 'Lord' actually speak to him; to you? **This is "Vision Casting" as discussed elsewhere on this webpage.**) Help me to discern.....we got all comfortable over here, and we refuse to move to the next place....that is not called dedication, that is called disobedience.

("Disobedience" to who or whom? To Pastor David? Go back and listen again to his sermon "A Loyal Friend" where he states that when a church member disagrees with him, he calls it "blasphemy!" Where is that found in the Bible?) That's not called dedication. (A Christian who stays close to the Word; is in daily devotions, Bible reading and prayer, will sense the Lord's leading, without having a pastor browbeat them and/or tell them *what God is saying to them thru him.*)

Some of you are going to say, 'I'm just going to stay here and serve the Lord until He calls me home to heaven.' When the Lord tells me that He's changing me and moving me in a new direction, my thing is not to stay here, but to say, 'God, I'm going to move with You to wherever you're taking me.' (*Is he speaking for God?*)

I've been taking spiritual inventories for about 25 years, (*For 25 years? I've never heard of any pastor "taking spiritual inventories for 'about 25 years.'*) and I notice that every time I take one, my gifting changes a little bit each time. (*His "gifting" changes/has changed over the last 25 years? What pastor is going to take psychological inventories for 25 years? Does he have a mental health issue? Did he not feel a genuine call to Preach the Gospel? And now as he is pastoring the South Norfolk Baptist Church; did he not sense a call to come to South Norfolk, or First Baptist of Galax (which is not what he has portrayed {my wife has relatives in that church}, or Red Lane Baptist, Powhatan, Virginia {where another member there shared with me a different viewpoint of his tenure there}, and the others he has pastored at?) And when I see where God has put me, I understand why the gifting has changed a little bit. ("see where God has put me?" Did he not feel a call to the South Norfolk Church? Of course, we recall that he *applied* for the position.) We've just got to learn to obedient to Him and move with Him.*



Are you like vinegar folks? Or, are we like honey? (He uses “You” and “We” interchangeably in the sermon: in other words, he’s talking about “You,” not himself.)

His closing Prayer: Help us (Read: “you”) see the nuances of change, so that we can just cooperate with you. Father, help us to put our speech, our attitudes, our position, through an analysis of your Spirit, so Father, we may discern whether we’re like vinegar, or acting like honey. (Honestly, pastor, you’ve been “throwing vinegar” in this sermon, or do you not recognize that?) Lord, sometimes we want to blame other people, and the problem is us. (Actually, the problem is “you” not “us.”) Lord, help us take that inventory (a reference to the psychological inventories) of what we are and what you are doing in our lives.

Sometimes we go through periods of grieving (“grieving”? Yes, many are grieving at how this pastor has completely turned this church’s’ ministry and educational program upside down, brought in entertaining “worship,” taught a new heretical way to pray; brought in the sinful practices of a Pool Table, and Secular Dancing; and drifted into the Social Gospel for minority children, to the exclusion of all/everyone else, ignored complaints from Adults and members of the Sunday School, dismissed the last full-time Minister of Music under the ruse of lack of funds, when it was something else, brought outright heresy into the pulpit!) of how you’ve used us in the past, help us not to become so consumed with that that we a sense of anticipation (this is “Vision Casting”) as to where you’re taking us and what you want to do with us. (Where “You’re {God} taking us?” or where *Pastor Slayton* is taking us?) Help our hearts’ desire to just be ‘I want to be obedient to You.’

Honestly, I would have already walked out a long time ago, if I had to endure all the haranguing “Sheep Beating” from the pulpit, with Scripture being used Eisegetically as a springboard for this pastor’s pet Social Gospel programs, with very little Exegetical preparation and Expository Sermon delivery. He did very little with the scripture text(s) used, and used another “obscure servant” as a platform to promote his social gospel venture. In the last 3 services I did attend there, I observed the lack of Scripture Reading (none), and the lack of Prayer (except by a Deacon for the Offering)!

May I say frankly, that a Pastor NEVER continually and consistently harangues his congregation! NEVER! This pastor needs to read my Dad’s sermon, “Take a Little Honey,” and he needs to get his own heart right with the Lord and ask forgiveness for what he is doing.

## “Vision Casting”

Since it is now obvious that Rev. Slayton is “Vision Casting” we need to understand this term in more detail. It is a heretical teaching practiced by Rick Warren and Perry Noble, whom Slayton has endorsed. Here is an article from The Discernment Research Group, concerning this unbiblical theology:

The use of the term "visioning" and all of its variants is part and parcel of the futurists' method of operating. They believe that "vision casting" is a way to transform Earth's future and man's destiny. Just before his death, Willis Harman (see previous posts) served as co-editor for *The New Business of Business: Sharing Responsibility for a Positive Global Future*, a publication of his World Business Academy (Berrett-Koehler Pub., 1997). Part Five of the book, entitled "Discovering the Spiritual Dimension of Business," details how to integrate spirituality (not Christian!) with the business domain. An example of this is given in a chapter by Taoist Diana Whitney, "Spirituality as an Organizing Principle," in which she explains "visioning."

"Shared **vision** and common values are said to create organization meaning and to provide the impetus for organizational change. Leaders at all levels of the organization are guided to inspire (**to fill with spirit**) rather than to motivate. **Visionary leadership**, . . . is said to make the difference between successful and unsuccessful organization change. '**Visioning**,' or conversationally projecting the organization into the **future**, and creating **alignment** among organizational members about the desired future are essential organizing endeavors." (p. 193-194) [emphasis added].

This type of language has entered evangelicalism like a flood. It came into the church via the business gurus and consultants. Churches have been feeling pressure to define their "mission, vision, and values." Pastors have been told they should strive to become "visionary" leaders. Rick Warren holds himself up as an example. He wrote:

"I know my leadership style. I am a big-picture, **vision-casting** leader. . . . There is nothing inherently right or wrong about being a **vision-casting** leader. It is simply the way God wired me." [[http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/20040100401\\_20\\_pastors.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/20040100401_20_pastors.cfm)]

"Creative Visualization" is said to be the "process of using mental images in order to acquire what one desires or produce changes in one's attitude, thus creating one's own reality. . . ." according to the *Seeker's Handbook*, an occult

dictionary by John Lash (Harmony Books, 1990). Envisioning is being widely used by neo-evangelical leaders, both individually and corporately, as a way to "name it and claim it," "declare" something into existence (United States Strategic Prayer Network), or bring about desired transformative results. In a recent interview in the *New Yorker* magazine, Rick Warren provides a poignant example of this practice: "Warren's publishers came to see him at Saddleback, and sat on the long leather couch in his office, and talked about their ideas for the book. 'You guys don't understand.' Warren told them. 'This is a hundred-million-copy book.' Warren remembers stunned silence: 'Their jaws dropped.' But now, nearly three years after its publication, *The Purpose-Driven Life* has sold twenty-three million copies. It is among the best-selling nonfiction hardcover books in American history. Neither the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, nor the *Washington Post* has reviewed it. Warren's own publisher didn't see it coming. Only Warren had faith. 'The best of the evangelical tradition is that you don't plan your way forward -- you **prophecy** your way forward,' the theologian Leonard Sweet says. '**Rick's prophesying his way forward.**'" (Malcolm Gladwell, "The Cellular Church," 9/12/05) [emphasis added].

### **The Truth:**

*"Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;"* (Psalm 100:3a)

Christians are being deceived into thinking that "visioning" processes such as these are necessary to bring about the Kingdom of God. Nothing could be further than the truth!

"I know of no scriptural requirement that our visualization is necessary to fulfill Jesus' prayer 'Thy Kingdom Come.' His Kingdom will come with or without our visualization. But it could well be that our visualization -- deliberate disobedience of God's prohibition against sorcery -- could prevent us from entering that Kingdom!" (Constance Cumbey, *A Planned Deception*, 1985, pp. 179-180)

*"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, **and sorcerers**, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."* (Revelation 22:14-15)

## “Vision Casting” Can Take Many Forms

Notice the “Vision” which the pastor “cast” for 2013, pasted above the Baptistry: “Miracles Happen.” This is a subset of the “Believe and Receive” “Word of Faith” heresy, also found in the “Prosperity Gospel.”



For 2014, he came up with the “Vision” of “Speak Life.” Both of these were designed to focus the membership exclusively on his main mission to poor youth in the Chesapeake area.



I can’t imagine sitting in a church auditorium, for 52 Sundays of the year, while gazing at this poster, in the background. (For 2015, his “Vision” is “In Christ.”)

My understanding of what was going on in this sermon, “A Hero Who Made an Impact,” was informed by two articles:

## **“Beating the Sheep”**

By **David Henke, from Founders.org**

For anyone living in America during the last quarter century the concept of abuse at the hands of those in positions of power, is quite familiar. There is child abuse, spousal abuse, workplace discrimination, mistreatment of the elderly in nursing homes, and many other examples. The reality of abusive behavior is as real as man's sin nature.

During the last ten years Christian authors have published numerous books on the subject of spiritual abuse (see a partial list on page 2). Is this happening because our society is very conscious of abuse, now, and the Christian community is simply applying that consciousness introspectively? Or, is it a response to a growing problem. Perhaps both causes are true.

In the last quarter-century there has been an explosion of independent religious groups. That, in itself, is not a problem. But, a problem may arise where there is a deficient polity coupled with a leader who fails to understand the necessity of two-way accountability. When such a situation occurs and there is no authority higher than the local leadership it can leave the membership without a means for correcting the abuse. The authors of the recent books on spiritual abuse found the vast majority of their examples among these groups

### **Spiritual Abuse Defined**

Spiritual abuse could be defined as the injury of a person's spiritual health. The cause could arise from a doctrinal error, or, it could be the result of a person trying to meet a legitimate need by an illegitimate means that weakens another person's spiritual health.

Inclination toward abuse in the spiritual arena is a human condition that can find expression wherever you find people engaged in spiritual activities. Cults are expert at achieving their ends using this method. The Bible talks a lot about this practice.

### **God's Attitude**

One of the most dramatic condemnations of spiritual abuse in scripture is found in Ezekiel 34.

*"And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?"*

*Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.*

*And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.*

*My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them."*

This description of the "shepherds of Israel" is the antithesis of the ministry of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. He strengthened the weak, bound up the broken, sought the lost sheep of Israel, and was a servant leader.

What must be the attitude of Jesus to those who would be spiritual shepherds but devour the spiritual health of their people? We get a glimpse of it in His reaction to the moneychangers in the Temple. The people of God were coming to the Temple to make their appropriate sacrifices in obedience to God. The moneychangers and others were fraudulently making profits at their expense. Jesus reaction was violent anger.

Another example is found in Jesus' description of the Pharisees in Matthew 23. He called them hypocrites to their faces and in front of the people. The Pharisees were willing to enforce their traditions on the people but not willing to care for them as would a shepherd. See *The News & Views*, Vol. 3, #5 for a discussion of this passage.

We can see in such passages that the abuser does not care for the welfare of those he leads as much as he cares for himself or the ideas he has. Aberrant groups tend to be established around some "wind of doctrine" or persuasive personality. When you examine the founding of the major cults of today you will find this to be the model.

## What Spiritual Abuse Looks Like

The first sign of an abusive group is that it is **authoritarian**. When it comes right down to it, control is more important than personal spiritual welfare. Leaders in an authoritarian system are not teachable. The attitude, like that of the Pharisees, is that they are the teachers and rulers of God's people, not their servants.

They may say they are teachable, but then set up rules which you must follow to approach them. Then they interpret those rules to rule you out of order. The former members of one particular group described to the author how their leader used this method to avoid accountability. He kept pointing out how their "heart is not right" in the way they brought issues to him.

It seems there is an innate consciousness on the part of false leadership that what is real is different than what is shown. Hence, two other characteristics, **image consciousness** and **suppression of criticism**, are necessary to keep the system intact.

Even the Soviet Union acted this way. They jammed the Voice of America, used their domestic press for propaganda, and sent dissidents to the Gulag. If what is preached is true, and is followed by those holding power, then accountability is nothing to fear.

Another sign of an abusive system is **perfectionism**. This can arise out of a theology that requires works for salvation, or to keep one's salvation. All cults practice this idea, which leads to spiritual exhaustion. It also leads to disillusionment or self-condemnation because perfection cannot be achieved.

A performance-based relationship with God is a useful tool for accumulating power and wealth in the group's leaders. This will generally be evident in the lifestyle of cult leaders compared to that of the membership.

Finally, you will almost always find an area of significant imbalance in the teachings, or practice, of abusive groups. The imbalance may show up as an unreasonable prohibition or an excessive burden. Commitment to this imbalance is a test of loyalty for the members, whether they realize it or not.

## Conclusion

It must be our individual responsibility to be aware of the modern manifestations

of Pharisaism. We must be ready to speak out, like Jesus, on behalf of others.

We need to be prepared to help those who have been spiritually injured by modern Pharisees, and a performance-based theology of salvation. What do these people need? First, and foremost, your unconditional friendship, willingness to listen to their horror stories without judgment, and reflection of the model of Jesus to them.

They also need time, probably a lot of time, to let the wound heal. But healing can only begin when the injury ceases for them AND the healing environment described above is present. Most spiritual abuse victims carry their injury with them all their lives. They can be healed and the good news is, when they are they usually become zealous to help others who have been likewise affected.

The man born blind was "cast out" of the Temple by the Pharisees because he said Jesus healed him. They were valuing their power and prestige more than they valued the man, or the truth. Being "cast out" of the Temple was a form of ex-communication, or disfellowshipping.

When Jesus heard the man had been cast out of the Temple He sought him out to minister to his spiritual need (John 9). This is our model as followers of Christ.

### **Books on Spiritual Abuse**

*Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* By Jeff VanVonderen

*Healing Spiritual Abuse* By Ken Blue

*Toxic Faith* By Arterburn and Felton

*Churches That Abuse* By Ron Enroth

*Recovering From Churches That Abuse* By Ron Enroth

*Wisdom Hunter* By Randall Arthur (fiction)

*Betrayal* By Randall Arthur (fiction)

### **“Authoritarianism in The Church”**

**By Steve Martin, Founders.org**

#### **The Problem**

A tragic and dangerous trend can be observed in some contemporary evangelical



churches. While standing against the lawlessness and anti-authority mood of this generation, some conservative, Bible-believing churches have drifted into deadly authoritarian tendencies. This sad phenomenon is increasingly becoming publicized and well-documented (see suggested reading list at the end of this article).

Why is this happening? What kind of attitudes engender authoritarianism in a church? Whose fault is it? What can be done about it?

Before proceeding any farther, some definition is in order. For the purposes of this article, “authoritarianism” is defined as an abuse of the authority given by Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit and revealed in God’s Word which the office holders of the local churches are to exercise. It has been my observation that this abuse of authority usually takes on one or both of the following forms.

First, the sin of authoritarianism exists when pastors and other office holders speak with binding authority where God Himself has not spoken in His written Word. If God has not pronounced on the subject, it is a usurpation of the Creator. A pastor may rightly proclaim “Thus saith the Lord” when preaching against idolatry, adultery, greed, marrying an unbeliever or any other violation of the express commands of God. That is his duty and God help the man who “cuts and trims” texts to speak smooth words to his flock. But the pastor has no warrant from Christ to speak with the binding authority of God’s *imprimatur* to issues upon which the written word of God is silent.

Second, the sin of authoritarianism exists when pastors and other office holders usurp the Lordship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the lives of God’s people by deciding the will of God for them where Scripture is silent. Church officers may not declare the will of God for God’s people on such choices as one’s career, choice of Christian mate, choice of lawful employment, place of living, schooling they attend, etc. without becoming surrogate deities. Flocks of sheep with paralyzed decision-making faculties reveal exposure to shepherds who played God with them. Thus the sinful tendency revealed in John Milton’s wry observation (“New presbyter is but old priest writ large”) returns to haunt churches. And even more sadly, some idol-worshipping sheep love it to be so.

### **Causes of the Problem**

Surely the cause of authoritarianism and idol-worship is sin. But what sins in particular need to be recognized, repented of and mortified by the Holy Spirit’s help? Five sins of the shepherds and three sins of the sheep come to mind. Taken

together they produce churches with a powerfully sinful pathology, which dishonors Christ, smothers the sheep, inflates the shepherds and hinders the work of God.

### **Sins of the Shepherds**

Today's authoritarian shepherds seem to fall prey to one or more of the following sins as they exercise their ministry.

1. *Idolatry*: the sinful desires of some men to always be in control, especially the control of the lives of God's sheep. Such sin is but a thinly veiled attempt to play God. And make no mistake, such men become as God to their flock. It is hardly surprising that pastors with such a sinful proclivity will eventually attain near papal infallibility in their churches. Paul's command to Titus in 2:15 ("rebuke with all authority . . . do not let anyone despise you") is their key verse in practice if not by precept. Usually the idolatrous sin of control is accompanied by a wrathful, berating, anxiety-producing spirit, as the authoritarian leader will tolerate no loose atoms in their personal universe of control (cf. Ezek. 34:4c; Matt. 20:25; 1 Pet. 5:3). Such self-deified pastors produce congregations which are more afraid of displeasing the pastors than they are of displeasing their Lord and Savior. Men who must be "God" to their people ironically lose the authority of God's Holy Spirit by their sin and God-given authority is replaced by fleshly control maintained by manipulation, intimidation, verbal coercion and ecclesiastical pulling of rank (e.g. "Now, I'm your elder and you had better be . . . or else . . ."). The Apostle John's description of Diotrephes seems to fall under such a category of sin (3 John 9-10).

2. *Praylessness*: authoritarian pastors do not rely upon prayer for their people as a primary instrument ordained by God for the edification of His people. As a result, they verbally coerce and bully their people to conform. They seek to rely only on the "arm of flesh" of their own strong-arm tactics. Such fleshly shepherds expend far more labor scolding, threatening, manipulating, confronting and "exercising discipline" to get their people to conform to their wishes than they do laboring before the throne of grace for the Spirit's supernatural work of conforming saints to Christ's image (2 Cor. 3:18). The Word of God makes plain that every shepherd's arsenal does include the rod and the staff. But it also emphasizes the importance of intercessory prayer for the growth of the people of God (cf. the recorded prayers of our Lord's and the Apostle Paul on behalf of their people). Sadly, many pastors beat their sheep because the weapons of the flesh are more comfortable in their own hands than the weapons of the Spirit. The Apostle James

warns about men whose lives are strewn with the wreckage of their carnal leadership and links it to their prayerlessness (James 3:13-4:3).

3. *Unbelief*: many office holders do not believe the declarative statements and promises of God in the Scripture. They do not believe that Christ is Lord of His true church and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. They do not believe that God the Holy Spirit is also Lord of the church, conforming God's people into His image. They do not believe God the Father will exercise His Fatherly love and discipline over the lives of His adopted children. In their unbelief, following hard on the heels of their own prayerlessness, authoritarian shepherds develop the mind-set, "If I don't make them do this, they won't!" or "If I don't make them do this, who will?" They really do not believe that the Holy Spirit will superintend His people and convict them of sin when away from the shepherd. Even as Christian parents must entrust their Christian teens unto the Lord as they drive the car down the driveway or leave for the university, so pastors must learn to trust God the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of His people when they are out from under the watchful gaze of their local under-shepherd. Sadly, such pastors create a "police state mentality" in their congregations where everyone's life is carefully monitored and scrutinized for any deviation, and "sins" are to be reported to the church leadership immediately.

4. *Lack of love for the sheep*: shepherds in ancient Palestine walked ahead of their sheep, leading them on and calling them by name to follow them to green pastures and cool waters. The sheep followed because they had come to know the shepherd's faithful care and loving concern for their own well-being. It was the shepherd who slept in the doorway of the sheepfold to guard the flock at night. It was the shepherd who fought the bear, the lion and other predators. It was the shepherd who protected the flock from the thief. It was the shepherd who left the 99 to go looking for the lost sheep. It was the shepherd who gently led the nursing ewes and their young.

Such imagery surely depicts a sacrificial love for the sheep on the part of the shepherd. But times have changed for many shepherds in the West. "Sheep ranchers" now employ barking dogs and shepherds in helicopters to drive the frightened, harassed and bewildered sheep ahead of them. The sheep in such contemporary operations are motivated out of fear of the snarling bite of the shepherds' seemly omnipresent dogs and the incessant bellowing of the shepherd himself over the loud-speaker in his helicopter overhead.

Sadly, in too many congregations today, sheep are driven by a man more like a

callous meat packer than a loving shepherd. Many modern shepherds don't even like sheep; it's just their business. In fact, men are encouraged not to get too close to the sheep or emotionally involved in their lives and problems. So many pastors don't actually like (let alone love) their people. They promote witnessing and world evangelization, they just don't like to be around individual sinners. One need only read of our Lord's loving compassion for the sheep-like sinners of His earthly ministry (Matt. 9:36, 14:14; Mark 1:40-41, 10:21) and recognize how far removed that is from many pastoral examples today. Sacrificial shepherd-love which lays down its life for the sheep has been replaced by loveless sheep management by uncaring sheep ranchers.

5. *Pride*: at root, all the above-mentioned sins of office bearers stem from an inflated sense of their own importance. John Calvin once shrewdly observed that from the king on his throne to the scullery maid in the kitchen, each of us harbors a kingdom in our hearts. Such is the sinful pride of the human heart. Creatures saved by the sovereign grace of their Creator and put into service of their fellow creatures may all too quickly forget that they are but clay pots made out of "proud dust" (to use Thomas Watson's apt expression). We must be reminded that we hold our office by our Master's pleasure, to do His bidding, and to further His Kingdom. Humble shepherds never forget from whence they have come nor to whom they must give an account.

Humble shepherds look to God's sheep with compassion; prideful shepherds look down upon the sheep with scornful contempt for their weaknesses and failings. Humble shepherds remember that even the Great Shepherd of the sheep patiently endured the misunderstanding, scolding and fleshly rebukes of His sheep (cf. Matt. 16:22; Mark 4:38; 1 Peter 2:21-23). Prideful shepherds however react to every real and perceived slight to their "august personage." How unlike their Master! Shepherds must learn that they cannot be conformed to the image of Christ as longsuffering and forgiving unless they are "long bothered" and wronged. Pride, however, responds to the irritations of sinners with anger. An angry leader is a prideful leader.

### **The Sins of the Sheep**

Sad to say, but the sheep themselves contribute their own sins to the creation of authoritarian ministries. Having talked with several wounded sheep, it has struck me how seldom they have seen their own culpability. They are quick to foist all blame upon their harsh taskmasters. But petty dictators cannot reign without the consent of their craven lackeys and servile subjects. There are at least three sins

which they contribute to the sinful pathology of authoritarian churches.

1. *Idol-worship*: sinful flesh is not content with the reality of the one true God. It wants to fashion an idol in place of the invisible God who is spirit. There is always the temptation to act like the Jews of Saul's time who wanted a human leader they could see, rather than the unseen God (cf. 1 Kings 8:1-18). But God shares His glory with no man, not even "called men" who are promoted to demi-god status by their adoring flock. Such flocks too often find for themselves a man who likes to lord it over the flock. Thus a sinfully symbiotic relationship is complete with an abusive authority figure coupled to his idol-worshipping minions (Jeremiah 5:30-31).

2. *Fear of man*: too many sheep are more gripped by the desire to please a man or more fearful of displeasing a man than they are of pleasing or displeasing Almighty God (cf. Prov. 29:25; John 5:41-44). They spend their time dancing around their idol, expending their energies catering to his every whim and seeking to avoid his wrath. Men pleasers have little stomach for potential conflict. They would never dare ask their exalted leader a question, no matter how respectfully. They would never ask for the biblical basis for a decision made by the leadership, even when that decision seems to fly in the face of clear Scriptural teaching. Such men-pleasers crave the smile of a man's countenance more than the smile of God and they will not speak the truth in love (Eph. 5:15).

3. *Unbelief*: too many sheep do not believe that God still guides His people today through the means of prayerful meditation upon the Word of God and the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is easier for the flesh to suspend the use of spiritual faculties and scriptural means of guidance for the short-cut of asking the leader to determine God's will and make the decisions all the time. It is not surprising that sheep who put men on pedestals, who cravenly serve men and who do not believe that God still guides will fall prey to abusive shepherds. It is only by the grace of God that it doesn't happen more than it does (Even good men know the temptation to become surrogate "gods" for their people and must stoutly resist the temptation to always answer questions of guidance and decision making.). Perhaps, some of the time, authoritarian shepherds are God's chastening rods on the backs of idol-worshipping, men-pleasing, unbelieving sheep who will not have God to be their God but who substitute a mere creature in His place (cf. Is. 2:22; Ps. 33:13-19).

## **The Cure for Authoritarian Shepherds and Idol-Worshipping Sheep**

The call of the Word of God to sinners is always “repent and believe.” So it is to the office holder who has exercised his office in sinful ways. So it is to the member of a local church who has sinfully preferred looking to puny men rather than Almighty God.

*Shepherds* convicted of the sins of authoritarianism should humbly come to the Word of God and prayerfully meditate upon those great passages which delineate the work of the man of God and warn against abuse (Gen. 18, Ex. 32-33; Lev. 10, Ez. 34; Matt. 23; the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Pet. 5, *et al*). Repentance involves confession. Public sins must be publicly confessed; private sins must be privately confessed.

Pastors guilty of authoritarianism would do well to preach to themselves and their flocks an extended series on 1 Corinthians 13, Philippians 2, the Sermon on the Mount, or John 10. They should not be afraid to humble themselves to the dust before God and their people, for our God does not despise a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17). He comes close to the lowly and meek and raises them up. The true people of God will not despise “a good man who is good enough to recognize that he is not good enough.” Pastors must seek to cultivate the habit of intercessory prayer on behalf of their people. They must pray for great grace to resist the persistent temptation to play God for people. They must learn to redirect potential idol-worshippers to the living God who delights in His Bride but who will not share her with another. They must also pray for the sheep that they would not become embittered but would be forgiving of the pastor’s sins.

Shepherds who have been guilty of not loving their flocks sacrificially must pray for God the Holy Spirit to produce the loving fruit of the Spirit in their hearts, and with a compassion bred of selflessness, they must cultivate works of loving concern even when the initial “feeling” of love is not present. God will not long withhold His Spirit from that man who pleads for grace to love the flock as Christ does and who begins regularly giving himself to them in sacrificial acts of service. Men who humble themselves before the Lord will be shown what they need to see and shown afresh how the blood of Christ cleanses even the stains of pastoral sins.

*Sheep* convicted of worshipping idols, pleasing men and disbelieving God must also face their sins and repent. Such repentance would include study and meditation upon God’s Word on idolatry, men-pleasing, and the sin of unbelief.

Sheep must learn to look to the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Weak faith grows best upon a diet of regular study and a believing hearing of the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Sheep must also learn from God's Word that enduring real or imagined conflict is not the worse thing in the world and that the worst that a man can do to you is nothing compared with what Almighty God can do. Sheep must be encouraged to learn in more depth that they are believer-priests with equal access to God and the same merit of Christ as their title deed for prayer. Sheep who walk with God, who know His Word and believe it and obey it are not likely to fall prey to tin gods, clay idols and fleshly shepherds.

May God give His people grace to see their sins and repent of them. We dare not glory in our current condition and slothfully ignore the deplorable state of much of Christ's Church. We must first judge ourselves that we may not be judged. And we must plead the purposes and promises of our Father in begging Him for the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

### **Additional Resources to Help You See the Problem and Turn From It**

Portions of the Word of God speaking directly to shepherds should be memorized and regularly meditated upon. A pastor or elder would do well to commit to memory Ezekiel 34:1-16; John 10:1-18; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 2 (whole chapter); 1 Peter 5:1-11.

1. Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian" in *Three Treatises*, Concordia; a clarion call of the Reformation against the abuses of the authoritarian Church of Rome.
2. Jerram Barrs, *Shepherds and Sheep*, Intervarsity Press; evaluation of the Pentecostal shepherding groups of the late 70's but sadly still applicable to abuses of authority today.
3. Roger O. Beardmore, ed. *Shepherding God's Flock*, Sprinkle Publications; a treasury of good counsel and teaching on biblical oversight, Should be read and reread by every office holder. Roger Beardmore's chapter is especially pertinent to the question at hand.
4. Harold L. Bussell, *Unholy Devotion*, Zondervan; sub-titled "Why Cults Lure Christians", it examines the problem of manipulative leadership in church groups and gets at some of the thorny issues faced not only by heretical cults but also orthodox but authoritarian churches.
5. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Authority*, Banner of Truth; an invaluable and unique contribution on the authority which the Holy Spirit gives to the churches and

to His servants. Cites the attempts of evangelicals the past 200 years to recapture their lost authority without recourse to the Holy Spirit. The Puritans would take note of their loss of church and pastoral power: “The Holy Spirit has a controversy with us. We must stop and see what we have done to grieve or quench Him.” Today we prefer to look to conferences, special speakers and events, jazzed-up entertainment, and the exercise of raw ecclesiastical power. Readers who know their church history will wince in recognition.

6. Clifford Pond, *Only Servants*, Grace Publications Trust; shows the leader as servant of Christ and His people. Refreshing reminders.
7. Ron Enroth, *Churches That Abuse*, Intervarsity Press; sadly chronicles the abuses of power that are wielded in the name of our Lord Jesus.
8. Erroll Hulse, ed. *Our Baptist Heritage*, Reformation Today Trust; wise and biblical counsel on facing and dealing with problems affecting Reformed Baptist and indeed the whole body of Christ. Should be pondered and discussed among church leadership groups.
9. Donald A. Carson, *A Call To Spiritual Reformation*, Baker; moving and enlightening examination of Paul’s priorities through the lens of his prayers for the churches. By a master exegete and teacher who has a heart for His Lord and His Church. Would make an excellent focus for a church leadership and a sermon series.
10. Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits*, Banner of Truth; masterful exposition of I Corinthians 13 with powerful application to us today. Pastors who need to learn more about love should long dwell here.
11. A. W. Tozer, *The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches Today*, Christian Publications; just what it says! Tozer believed that Christ’s servants often try to wield more authority in local churches than Christ Himself did through His Word. Hits painfully close to home for too many churches.



**(My thanks to Dr. John MacArthur, for some of the following insights into the importance of the proper Exposition of the Scripture):**

***The failure to Exposit the Word of Scripture:***

1. It usurps the authority of God over the mind and soul of the hearer. God's truth is sovereign; not the Pastor's. It is a question of God's authority and His Word is the revelation of that authority. Thus, God is silenced.
2. It usurps the Lordship of Christ over His church. The only way He can have Lordship over the Church is to be heard. Thus, the only way Christ can lead His church is to speak to the Church.
3. It hinders the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to speak to His people. (1 Peter 1:23). People might enjoy the rock and roll concert that precedes the inane talk, but the Holy Spirit is where the Word of God is at work. It is the work of the Holy Spirit through His Word to save. The whole work of Salvation comes through the Word of God.
4. It legitimizes a lack of submission to Scripture. If you are asking people to submit to your own insights, your own perspectives; anything other than Scripture, is legitimizing non-submission to Scripture, by putting something else in it's place instead.
5. It severs the Preacher personally from the regularly sanctifying work of the Scripture. You don't want to have an un-sanctified Preacher. Being able to open up the Word of God is to be pure in your heart. The Word cannot do it's work unless sinful things are set aside. (Ezra 7:10). You study the law of the Lord yourself, and then you teach it to others.
6. It removes spiritual depth and transcendence from the souls of the people, and therefore it cripples personal and corporate worship. All that is left is to manipulate people emotionally. Spiritual depth is critical; you have to go down before you can go up. The height of your worship is in direct proportion of your understanding. Shallow understanding, leads to shallow worship. Deep understanding leads to deep worship, because you infuse into the expressions of worship, all your theology.

I know that some people will go Sunday to Sunday, to a church, and hear some

clever story, but it has no real power. Many churches get filled up with entertainment because they can't really worship. They sort of trip along in their own casual world with their simplistic ideas and simplistic "7-11 hymns." What has power is truth, coming from God, from His Word, that gives you an insight you've never had before. There is nothing better than to have a congregation that is deep in the things of the Lord; who understand the subtleties of the hymns, which understand the nuances of theology, so that their worship is truly high, and not the result of any emotional manipulation.

7. It prevents the Preacher from fully speaking for Christ. A Preacher should know that he has been called to speak on behalf of Christ to His church. We have the mind of Christ revealed in the Bible; a preacher need to know it, in order to proclaim it. He who doesn't know the mind of Christ, does not know what Christ thinks, does not know Christ's will as revealed in Scripture; cannot speak for Christ to every issue. They may know the culture, be funny, clever, they want people to like them; but they can't speak for Christ. There is no premium on shallowness, lack of knowledge of Scripture. We must be experts in the revelation of Scripture through study week after week in every passage; so we can truly say, "Thus says the Lord."

8. It depreciates, by example the spiritual benefit and duty of studying Scripture. If the Preacher doesn't do it, why should the person in the pew do it? To model a superficial attitude toward Scripture in the pulpit is horrendous. If you're not dedicated to a study of the Word of God, don't expect your people to be either. You have just cut them off from their spiritual life; because "man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." You're sending a terrible message to people: that the Bible doesn't matter; the Bible isn't interesting; there are things better than the Bible: my insights, your insights. Don't get caught up in Bible study....I certainly don't. A pastor, who doesn't support, attend, teach at a mid-week Prayer Meeting, also sends this same message. When the Bible is taught, and becomes the passion of the pulpit, it inevitably becomes the passion of the pew. Where is the pastor spending all his time? What does he really consider as important?

9. It breeds a congregation weak and indifferent to the Glory of God. It redirects people from loving Christ; from loving God and truth; away from finding their joy and satisfaction in the Word. If it is not regularly proclaimed from the pulpit, the people become absorbed with themselves. Eventually, the messages given are those given that become attractive to people as if the people are the ones who are to define what is done. Consumed with their own interests and ideas, they become

self-centered and preoccupied. They don't know what it means to make sacrifices for God.

10. It robs people of their only true source of help. There is no help, apart from the Lord; from understanding our God, His covenants, His care, compassion; His providence, and His truth. When people become dependent on stories, or clever insights, or programs, they are unable to feed themselves, and they are only able to receive milk; you are only doing what Jeremiah 8:11 says, treating people's wounds superficially.

When you face a real crisis in life, the only help you're going to get is the real truth in Scripture. It is your theology that anchors you. There is a biblical pattern that can alone alter personal relationships, say, in a marriage. When they are not given biblical exposition, they are literally robbed of the only true source of help. People who spend their lives in a shallow Christian environment, when they face the crises of life, they can't stand, because they have nothing to stand on. (Such as the man who earlier this year, was invited to "preach" and went into an emotional diatribe about how, during a hurricane, he tried to drive to the church building and go inside and get peace. This is a sign of spiritual immaturity. I have to ask, "Why was he allowed to 'preach' in the pulpit in the first place? Did not the Pastor recognize a superficial spiritual knowledge of this individual? And why does he allow him to continue to stand in the pulpit; something the Pastor was called to do...unless he does not understand his Biblical mandate, and has not been truly called of the Lord to that of Pastoral ministry in a church.")

11. It creates a destructive disconnect between sound doctrine and life. There is some idea that to be relevant, you have to be into the culture. Well, life imitates theology. People who are taught to trust their intuition or their human insight are going to be massively disappointed. But when you teach Scripture and you teach theology, you do it relentlessly, and consistently, you are saying to people, 'this is the foundation of your living. This is not irrelevant; this is what is relevant.' You live your theology.

Some of the worst trends that have entered the church, was the idea that we have to get theology out of the church, theology is narrow, theology is ivory-tower, egg-head kind of stuff, not practical, not relevant. This is the basis for the "Seeker Sensitive" "Church Growth" "Church Health" movement, as it is variously called. Or, we'll have conflict with folks who have a different theology. But theology is the best word. There is a good connection between sound doctrine and right living. If you have weak theology, you're going to be weak in the vicissitudes of life.

12. It dishonors God by omitting those truths that trouble, offend, and terrify sinners. Many preachers want to smooze sinners. They don't want to offend anyone. Gagging God is really pride; oversimplify the message that might offend anyone. But scripture is full of terrifying truth. Acts 20 tells about Paul warning the Ephesians. If you just go through the scriptures, as they are laid out, you don't edit God. This is God's Word; it is up to preachers to be faithful to it.

13. It disconnects people from the legacy of the past. The first thing Dad would do on a Monday would be to begin studying the verses under consideration for the next Sunday's sermon. He would look into the Greek and Hebrew, the commentators, and other sources that were written by Godly writers. But it's popular today to be the cool dude who treats those who have written hundreds of years before, with disdain. There needs to be link between their pastoral preaching ministry with the past. There is, however, a rampant disregard for theologians of the past. How sad to disconnect from this past. The same goes for great hymn writers who become virtually unknown in the "7-11 Hymn" environment.

14. It removes protection from error that is deadly for the church. Shepherds need to protect the flock. Grievous wolves will appear in the church that is not properly guarded; we are suppose to guard the truth; building up the sheep; to keep them from being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; we are suppose to guard the Pulpit from allowing just anyone to speak from behind it. It's sad to have folks looking for the truth, and not hearing it in the pulpit. You should be able to discern error and defend yourself from error.

15. It deceives people that think they have heard from God, when they haven't. Or that they have heard something profound, when in fact, they haven't. If they only hear your insights and thoughts, they have been deceived.

Hosea 4:6: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest."

### **Some sound advice concerning "Name Calling"**

"A pastor should not call out congregants in a direct manner during the normal, regular preaching of the Word. They should not use the pulpit to browbeat, humiliate, and bully individuals in their congregations. That is unbiblical and unacceptable."

**Carl Trueman**, *professor, Westminster Theological Seminary*

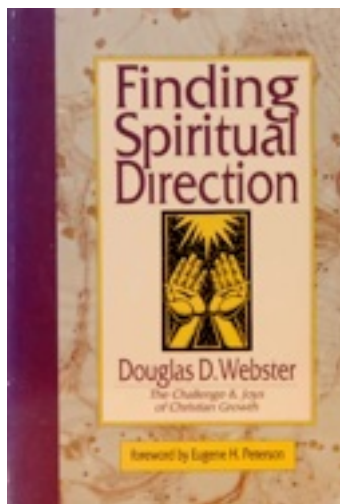
"I can't imagine a situation in which it is healthy or wise to attempt individual

church discipline or exhortation in the context of preaching in a worship service. Such an approach easily becomes performance art and hardly brings stature or biblical weight to the pulpit."

**R. Albert Mohler Jr.**, *President, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*

### **Not Careful in Selecting "January Bible Study" Materials**

In January 2014, Pastor Slayton began a study of the book "Finding Spiritual Direction: The Challenge and Joys of Christian Growth" by [Douglas Webster](#), a Presbyterian who received his Ph.D. at the Catholic University of St. Michael's, Toronto, Canada. He currently works as an associate pastor in Central Presbyterian Church, N.Y.C. and lectures at many non-denominational and Episcopal churches.



It was unfortunate that Rev. Slayton did not turn to a Southern Baptist study course, such as the January Bible Study for 2014 (Book of Colossians). It is apparent that he continues to push the "seeker sensitive" heretical methodology, now teaching a book written by a man who has written books on the heretical "Spiritual Directors/directions," "Formation in Ministry," and "Church Growth" concepts, using pop psychology, intertwined with Calvinism.

(NOTE: we understand that some SNBC leaders regularly read this website: as soon as this new information about the heretical Bible study was published here, they changed the title of the "Wednesday Night Bible Study" in the bulletin, and on the church website, to be simply a "Wednesday Night" or, as sometimes was listed, "Winter Bible Study of The Book of James," *conveniently*

*omitting the fact that they were still teaching this heretical book, "Finding Spiritual Direction" which uses the book of James on a faux basis).*

In "Finding Spiritual Direction," Webster used a study of the book of James to provide a basis for the essential practices of anyone wanting to provide spiritual direction to others; he sees "spiritual directors" as "physicians of the soul" (page 14); as "parents" (page 16); and as "farmers who love the land and understand their work" (page 171).

Webster wants to avoid a subjective view of the will of God and seems to demean others' means in which God communicates to us today, when he states, "We depend too heavily on personal impressions, inner urges and fuzzy feelings to justify dubious actions as God's will. There is an inherent conflict of interest in looking to our own feelings for direction when we should be following the straightforward counsel of God's will." (page 129).

Webster's aim in "Finding Spiritual Direction" is to encourage church members to identify problems that are not in line with God's will. *(He doesn't say why church members should become so involved in other members' lives, to the extent that the "spiritual directors" he advocates the members become),* assist other church members to discern evil motives and selfish pursuits within their lives and the church body; that members should challenge those who are angry, and yet themselves are righteously angry when God's word is being violated. He bases this on this on James 5:1-6, which is taken out of context. This is not scripturally correct.

*Webster seeks to use a unbiblical model of what a "Spiritual Director" does,* through limiting his statements to the teachings of the book of James. Therefore, as one would expect, there are Scripture quotations and citations throughout the book. But he limits his reference of past spiritual leaders of church history to Bonhoeffer. (It would later be revealed that the pastor highly endorsed Detrich Bonhoeffer, in a Sunday sermon).

*Training members of the church to be "Spiritual Directors" is not based on scripture. This is Heresy! I was first introduced to the "Spiritual Directors" false theology when an Episcopal Army Chaplain unsuccessfully attempted to coerce other chaplain clergy into using this methodology.*

### **Background information about the author, Douglas Webster, is instructive:**

When he was pastor of a Presbyterian church in San Diego, California, he wrote a review, which was published in the book, "Evaluating the Church Growth Movement." He enthusiastically supported Dr. Donald McGavran, who was a key player in starting the "seeker sensitive/purpose driven/church growth" movement. Webster praised "contextualization" and McGavran's book, "The Bridges of God," a heretical work that laid the foundation for the "Church Growth," movement which was incorporated into the "Purpose Driven" heresy.

He went on to praise the "Market-Driven Church," as the only way to grow a church. Although this is the place I would state that Pastors should always investigate the author of any book they intend to teach in their church.

Church members should discern and examine carefully any new teaching or worship style that is not in keeping with the Scriptures. I like what Billy Sunday said: "Jesus did not call us to multiply "members" but to make disciples. Churches don't need new members half so much as they need the old bunch made over."

Donald McGavran----Founding professor of Fuller's School of Missions whose influence has reshaped globally the "mission" of the "church". **McGavran taught that the job of the church is not to save individuals or disciple them.** (In fact, to save one person out of the "context" of his sociological 'unit' is a setback to global evangelization according to him: dubbing the traditional evangelism of one soul "extraction evangelism." (Please read the statement in **red print** again. Do you understand what this is saying?)

His personal philosophy is that when Jesus said to make 'disciples of the nations', He meant literally, the NATIONS, i.e., governments were to be discipled. This is what is called "**reconstruction theology**." He developed a methodology of "people movements" that is taught in the 'Perspectives' program globally. He developed the idea that cultures were to be "redeemed" ....the gospel was to be "contextualized" for each culture and adapted by the use of "redemptive analogies" to be acceptable in each culture...syncretism to the utmost, *this perverted the gospel into a 'culturally relevant' message* that anyone could adapt to...anyone that is except a truly born again believer.

**The paganism, so blatant in this movement, is a direct result of this teaching. They boast in how they can incorporate pagan practices into Christianity.**

(McGavran's book "The Bridges of God" originally titled, "How Peoples Become Christian" was published in the early 50's, and laid the groundwork of his philosophy).

### **Changing How a Southern Baptist Church is Organized**

In the "Seeker Sensitive" movement, "community" and "missional" are the buzzwords today... and if you claim to be a "missional community," you are really on the cutting edge. Rev. David Slayton is working hard to design "community" through small groups, centered around felt-needs; the "Seeker Sensitive" "Church Growth" methodology of Rick Warren; and now it is apparent, on the misguided theology of Bonhoeffer.

"Church growth" is all the rage. For pastors like Slayton, the focus is on leadership. For laymen, on "reaching people." In the church world, church-growth is the standard of success. If a church "reaches people," and the pastor is a "visionary leader," then the church will be considered a success. If a church makes it into somebody's bogus "Fastest Growing Church" list, then the growth frenzy continues with the sheep flocking to check out what innovation has been initiated to reach the masses for Christ. I think the Emperor has no clothes. I reject the church-growth and church-health principles taught at almost every pastor's conference, and expressed in almost every church. Slayton's building "missional community" does nothing more than produce a feel-good complacency in the "community members."

### **"Social Gospel" Ministry+"Missional Theory"=Shallow Worship & Theology**

So much of South Norfolk is now devoted to "social services" outreach programs that have nothing of the Gospel of Christ or Discipleship Training. The Christian is not so much to engage his society, but to come out from it, yet the church is becoming filled with those who are both *in* the world, and *of* the world; who are organizing to change the world into a kinder, gentler "community." But the success rate is not there: Society is more liberal and godless than ever before, with no end to its decline in sight. The "missional church" will continue to gather in their entertaining "worship," and pat themselves on the back for their "victories." South Norfolk has been totally impotent in bringing about societal change. Building "missional community" in this case has only produced a feel-good atmosphere. Although church members are being assured that they are going



to be people of impact, as part of a “community,” they fail to really make any difference. They fool themselves into thinking the Emperor’s clothes are superb.

I reject the “missional-community church-growth movement” because it is deceptive. Participants in these churches feel like they are stalwart conservatives in a Bible-believing, Gospel-proclaiming, Hell-reducing, Kingdom-expanding church. They consistently proclaim, “My preacher really preaches the Bible.” True, their preacher does hold up a Bible and talk about how true and authoritative it is. He even quotes from the Bible fairly consistently (*“I know the plans I have for you...I will never leave you nor forsake you...I am come that you might have life more abundantly... (and, of course) bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse”*). What these church members do not know is that they have adopted the leftist agenda (socialism) or neo-con agenda (reconstructing a Christian society), which is as empty as it has always been.

*It’s interesting to note, that yesterday’s fundamentalists, are today’s liberals.* (A point recently made by Dr. R. Albert Mohler, President of our Southern Seminary, Louisville, KY.) Think about that: in relation to the lack of theology in the pulpit, the shallow music, and the entertainment being offered as “worship.” Consider this: years ago, you would never have seen a youth group from Jerry Falwell’s Liberty University show up in a church wearing grubby street bum dress, with guitar “slingers” and drummers and singers, dancing and prancing around a pulpit platform, with the pastor (David Slayton) getting into the Charismatic spirit of the performance, clapping and hand raising. But I witnessed this myself at South Norfolk Baptist. (My thanks to pastor Dr. Randy White for helping me to “connect the dots” of what David Slayton is doing, in using the sermonic code words “Community” and “Missional” in remaking South Norfolk into something other than a true church).

I haven’t mentioned proclamation of the Word, because in the several services I attended over the last three years I did attend at South Norfolk, and in those I have heard recently on the internet, there was not much expository preaching, except a pitch for a new sound system, (which, from my background in radio station engineering, didn’t need replacement), 7-11 hymns, praise singers, rock and roll instruments, and youth program promotion. The church, in the eyes of some, may do good works, have good music (in the ears of many), have a good sound system, and a pastor who could lead circles around Moses. What it doesn’t have is the backbone to proclaim that our world must reject humanism, social justice, poverty eradication efforts, and other whitewashed measures of “expanding the Kingdom of God”...and, must find its only hope in the death, burial, and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. Like Roger Mardis, who was fixated on the abortion issue, previously referenced, David Slayton is fixated on “fixing” the underprivileged minority youth of the Tidewater area, with the “Social Gospel,” to the exclusion of his primary responsibility as a pastor, under God, and as outlined in the Bible.

If the electricity-dependent “worship” were suddenly cut off in the church auditorium, we would quickly see how much vast emptiness there would be: no show, no crowd. (When the \$250. projector light bulb burned out in the middle of the 2012 Christmas Eve service, the worship leader had to resort to using the Hymnal. How wonderful it was to hear good Christmas hymns!)

**Having “Adjusted” the Worship Service,  
Now “Adjusting” the Auditorium Architecture  
To Attract the Pagan**

I am not a fan of the platform/stage/motion picture screen architecture of the redesigned/redirected South Norfolk Baptist “missional-community” church. That is a total rejection of centuries old theologically driven architectural principles of church design that understood a theology of aesthetics; not to mention the pipe organ now un-played, and it’s console conveniently moved into a side classroom at Pastor Slayton’s direction. *(Someone told me they thought the Property Committee was behind the move. **Read my lips: Nothing happens in that church without David Slayton’s approval, and, at his direction). In a private conversation with him, he was offered a \$ 50,000.00 free gift, from a non-profit organization, to have this Henry Pilcher’s Sons Pipe Organ (which was already in playable condition) completely restored. He declined the gift.***



Toe stud, Swell, and Crescendo Pedals.

In December 2007, after a Sunday morning service, I went up to the pipe organ and played a few hymns. I came back that night, and after the evening service, took some pictures of the console for the Organ Historical Society database. But, when I attempted to play the organ, found that someone had gone up to the console in the intervening hours, and forcibly broke the Swell pedal (seen in the picture above; it is the pedal on the left of the two.) So, someone, between the time of the end of the morning service, and the end of the night service, had gone up to the console and vandalized the organ. Who? I'm sure that someone who is reading this website has knowledge of who that individual was. It clearly had to be someone who had access to the church building, probably after-hours, and was not in favor of the organ being used in a service; or came into the auditorium while no one was around. Really, they have no respect for God's House, and He knows who they are, and one day, they will have to answer to Him for what they did.

It became much clearer in the next year or so, that Pastor Slayton did not

want to use the organ, and in fact, orchestrated the removal of the console to the side right-hand classroom. Of course, the \$50,000 free grant that had been offered to bring the entire organ to a fully-functioning instrument, and would have fixed that deliberately vandalized pedal, was on the table in 2012, but was rejected.

(Lynn Hardaway, who was brought in by David Slayton on several occasions, included in his thesis, (written for a degree in “Church Health” from the non-Southern Baptist, Liberty Seminary), his belief that **the interior architecture of a church auditorium and educational building, *MUST be changed to attract the pagan.*** This is the “Seeker Sensitive”/Rick Warren methodology that panders to the unsaved, *while ignoring the already-Saved Church Member.*)

**An Expensive Sound System was purchased, while ignoring needed Educational Sunday School materials and Senior Adult Church programs, not to mention building maintenance/repairs:**



**(Having been personally involved in contracting for a military chapel sound system, THIS IS NOT CHEAP equipment)!!**

**Having an Expensive Sound System in place,  
the Pulpit Platform, has become a Theater Stage,  
For Entertainment,  
Not Preaching or Worship:**



**New Theater Stage at South Norfolk Baptist**

**Marketing Heresy to the Young:  
The Choreography of "Worship"**



**Rap music for Jesus?**



### **Dancing at South Norfolk is now offered as part of the entertainment for "Worship"**

Church is *not* where we go to be entertained by a bunch of narcissists. Church is where we go to receive God's gifts through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments; the Lords Supper and Baptism. Through these gifts, we receive faith, and have that faith renewed and fed.

Entertainment in a church is a symptom of a larger problem in Americanized Christianity. It is also a symptom of something wrong with a pastor who allows irreverence in the Lord's House. So many people are now getting used to going to churches where Sunday services look more like Oprah or Dr. Phil' self help seminars; so much so, that for many I would imagine actually walking into a church, where Jesus is the center of both the liturgy of the service and the theological message, would be a none too subtle culture shock.

(Is the pastor calling this nonsense, "Liturgical Dance?" Something that he saw at the heretical "Richmond Outreach Center" and wants to import into South Norfolk?)

### **There is *Never* a Good Reason For Liturgical Dance...**

... I loathe liturgical dance with the white hot passion of a thousand burning heretics. I don't understand its purpose, other than to keep the makers of spandex unitards in business. Even more baffling is why liturgical dance *has* to be performed inside a Church, a sacred space. Or even worse, during the liturgy itself.

I suppose if the performers did their jigs, more appropriately, in a dance hall then it couldn't technically be called *liturgical* dance, now could it?

But that begs the question... if the only thing making the dance number spiritual is the location and not the performance itself, then how exactly is the spectacle supposed to religiously edifying? It might seem logical to assume that just being inside a Church itself would be enough of a spiritual experience, making all that dance-y dance just empty theatrics. But that's just crazy talk. A church, all by it's lonesome, devoid of all that "active participation" can't possible be spiritually uplifting.

Is the Pentecostalism, which has been imported by the Pastor, not doing enough, to evoke the emotional "worship" experience? I need young people, toe tapping across the pulpit platform, to *tap* into my sense of intrigue? Please folks. Just say "No" to liturgical dance.

I wasn't surprised to learn that dance routines were invading the "worship" of God at SNBC (or should I say the false worship). After hearing about the secular dance lessons in the Hughes Fellowship Hall, I remembered that the pastor is a devotee the Richmond Outreach Center, (who recently had 4 Pastors resign in disgrace) and has endorsed Bethel Church, Redding, California, on the official SNBC website, as of November 2014. Bethel Church?

Heretic, Bill Johnson, the 'pastor' of Bethel Church, Redding, California, in addition to teaching "**Grave Sucking**" and hosting "**Dead Raising Teams**," states: "dance can be powerful tools of transformation in other's lives." To further this end, they hold "Arts conferences" where they share "testimonies and impart a supernatural anointing for signs and wonders, which can be translated in what you create though hearing God's voice, asking for understanding and then releasing His presence as you create!"

In the conferences Bethel sponsors, there are workshops, which endeavor "to teach on and activate in what it looks like to connect with what the Holy Spirit is saying in the moment and express it through dance." They advertise "You will discover how to use your talent and ability to make prophetic declarations and transform your surroundings." And they ask "What does it mean to dance prophetically or deliver a word through dance?" (**See more information about Bethel Church on the "Emergent Church" webpage of this website**).

### **Catering to one Age/Ethnic Group**

Having been the senior Chaplain pastor of several large Army military chapels, I know from experience, that it does not matter what the ethnic makeup of the congregation is; God loves all people: rich or poor, black, white, or Hispanic. In over 23 years of military service, I have counseled hundreds of young Soldiers, Marines, civilians, and their families; from every walk of life, and cultural background.... but I find it surprising that, as a pastor, *Rev. Slayton caters to only one minority ethnic age group.*

South Norfolk is a “field white unto harvest;” a field filled with young, middle-age, and senior adults; people who are white, black, and brown; who are being ignored, in deference to black teenagers, because of the current pastor’s narrow focus and misunderstanding of the Bible’s instructions/duties to a pastor and church. (It is said that he did the same thing at the Galax, Virginia church; except he catered to the local Hispanic population; and wanted to do numerous out-of-the-country “mission” trips, which the Deacons opposed. (See the Video “Are Short Term Mission Trips a Good Idea?”) It took several years for that church to recover. He mentioned in a recent sermon that he had had trouble in that church with the Deacons. I was not surprised. He also had problems at Red Lane Baptist Church. It is said that his legacy of dictatorial leadership style preceded him to South Norfolk, which is why, at South Norfolk Baptist, he listened to what one Sunday School class had to say, stated that he didn’t agree with them, and went on doing what he wanted to do anyway.....just as he did with me concerning the repair of the pipe organ in January 2012). He was simply following the recommendations of “seeker sensitive” leaders who say, listen, then do what you want to do anyway.

Like Lynn Hardaway, Slayton follows the CEO style of leadership they were taught. That “CEO model of Pastor” has to go. I know that almost every “missional-community church-growth model” pastor’s conference says this same thing, continually reminding pastors that they are not CEOs. Then, having given the obligatory rejection of CEO style leadership, they tell the Pastor that he should be known as the “Lead Pastor” (“lead”...short for *leadership*, a key CEO trait). They instruct him in the best means of *vision development* and “*vision casting.*” They “Peter Drucker” him to spiritual death. They study the Bible, not looking for Biblical truth, but looking for the leadership traits of Moses (one of the worst leaders of all time), Gideon (zero leadership capability), Nehemiah (who was not a priest nor a pastor, but a government official), Jesus (who did nothing but follow His Father), or Paul (who said pastors should “preach the Word”).



Going further, these SBCV (not connected to the Southern Baptist Convention) pastor's conferences that Slayton attends (or "church growth" books he reads) talk about all the programs and paradigms the church could/should implement to develop its "missional-community." Of course, as soon as you create any kind of ministry (i.e. *program*) in the church, it requires some oversight, which requires the Pastor to leave his pastoral function and begin acting like the conference/book instructed him to act: like a leader.

But it's not simply a matter of only "loving all people," as Slayton continually refers to in many of his sermons (recorded and electronically stored for reference), (although one wonders if he does love *all* people not just disadvantaged teens); which he uses as a smokescreen and excuse for **his unbiblical *adjustment* of the Worship of God, for the unsaved**. And the worship services I had attended over a three year period, have been watered down; "adjusted" for the unsaved; and the sermons I heard in that 3 years I attended, have been dumbed down, to the lowest possible common denominator. **The failure to preach the Word of God, usurps the Lordship of Christ over His Church.**

Having a teenage crowd attend, listening to a preacher who never explains the Scripture, but only talks about things he thinks the people want to hear about (like football, youth programs, etc.) and consistently includes references to those entertaining/recreation programs in his sermons, (and I have heard David Slayton do this), gives the impression that that some great spiritual work is going on; *the reality is there is no spiritual work going on whatsoever! Because the Holy Spirit only works through the Word of God, not through recreation and entertainment.*

*The Holy Spirit of God uses the Word of God as the only means of saving.* (1 Peter 1:23). The Holy Spirit uses the Word to sanctify them. The only tool the Spirit has is the Scripture. Where the Scripture is replaced by anything else, the work of God is hindered.

There might be a large crowd. They might be having a great time. They might enjoy the rock & roll concert that usually precedes the insipid, inane talk. But that's not where the Spirit of God is working.

The Spirit of God saves through the Word, sanctifies through the Word, comforts through the Word, instructs through the Word, edifies through the Word.

The failure to use expositional preaching, manifests a lack of submission to Scripture. It is unthinkable that a believer would not submit to Scripture. It is

even more unthinkable that a preacher would not submit to Scripture. To do so, reveals an inadequate, inferior love for God and an understanding of His Glory and authority of Christ, and an inadequate and inferior understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The heart of all true preaching is that the preacher submits to the Word. There is nothing else. But when, as Pastor David Slayton has, brings heretical teachings (“The Circle Maker”) into the pulpit and educational life of the church, how can he expect absolute submission to the Word of God? He has brought shame upon the name of Christ.

**I say again: the failure to use expository preaching, the failure to preach the Scripture faithfully, plus and minus nothing; Scripture truth from Scripture context, severs the preacher personally from the sanctifying Grace of Scripture. When the Bible is not the consuming passion of the pulpit, why would we expect it to be the consuming passion of the pew? *You have just cut them off from the Word of God;* Jesus said, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” *And quoting a few verses of scripture, with some folksy homespun illustrations, followed by “reading oneself” into the scripture, is not expository preaching; it is eisegesis and narsigesis of the scripture text.***

I’m not surprised that pastors, who don’t preach the Word, will spend three or four years in one place, five in another, and a few more someplace else; and then leave, taking their little bag of sermons with them, from place to place; leaving the last church as a fractured fellowship, having to pick up the pieces and heal broken emotions. Week by week, year by year...intensive study of Scripture exposes the soul to the power of the God’s Truth.

**Consider this quote from the article: “Preaching with Authority: Three Characteristics of Expository Preaching” by Dr. R. Albert Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Seminary:**

“Authentic expository preaching is marked by three distinct characteristics: authority, reverence, and centrality. Expository preaching is authoritative because it stands upon the very authority of the Bible as the word of God. Such preaching requires and reinforces a sense of reverent expectation on the part of God’s people. Finally, expository preaching demands the central place in Christian worship and is respected as the event through which the living God speaks to his people.

“The preacher dares to speak on behalf of God. He stands in the pulpit as a steward “of the mysteries of God” ([1 Cor 4:1](#)) and declares the truth of God’s word, proclaims the power of that word, and applies the word to life. This is an admittedly audacious act. No one should even contemplate such an endeavor without absolute confidence in a divine call to preach and in the unblemished authority of the Scriptures.

“In the final analysis, the ultimate authority for preaching is the authority of the Bible as the word of God. Without this authority, the preacher stands naked and silent before the congregation and the watching world. If the Bible is not the word of God, the preacher is involved in an act of self-delusion or professional pretension.

“Standing on the authority of Scripture, the preacher declares a truth received, not a message invented. The teaching office is not an advisory role based on religious expertise, but a prophetic function whereby God speaks to his people.

“Authentic expository preaching is also marked by reverence. The congregation that gathered before Ezra and the other preachers demonstrated a love and reverence for the word of God ([Neh 8](#)). When the book was read, the people stood up. This act of standing reveals the heart of the people and their sense of expectation as the word was read and preached.

“Expository preaching requires an attitude of reverence on the part of the congregation. Preaching is not a dialogue, but it does involve at least two parties—the preacher and the congregation. The congregation’s role in the preaching event is to hear, receive, and obey the word of God. In so doing, the church demonstrates reverence for the preaching and teaching of the Bible and understands that the sermon brings the word of Christ near to the congregation. This is true worship.

“Lacking reverence for the word of God, many congregations are caught in a frantic quest for significance in worship. Christians leave worship services asking each other, “Did you get anything out of that?” Churches produce surveys to measure expectations for worship: Would you like more music? What kind? How about drama? Is our preacher sufficiently creative?

“Expository preaching demands a very different set of questions. Will I obey the word of God? How must my thinking be realigned by Scripture? How must I change my behavior to be fully obedient to the word? These questions reveal submission to the authority of God and reverence for the Bible as his word.

“Likewise, the preacher must demonstrate his own reverence for God’s word by dealing truthfully and responsibly with the text. He must not be flippant or casual, much less dismissive or disrespectful. Of this we can be certain, no congregation will revere the Bible more than the preacher does.

“If expository preaching is authoritative, and if it demands reverence, it must also be at the center of Christian worship. Worship properly directed to the honor and glory of God will find its center in the reading and preaching of the word of God. Expository preaching cannot be assigned a supporting role in the act of worship—it must be central.

“When today’s evangelicals speak casually of the distinction between worship and preaching (meaning that the church will enjoy an offering of music before adding on a bit of preaching), they betray their misunderstanding of both worship and the act of preaching. Worship is not something we do before we settle down for the word of God; it is the act through which the people of God direct all their attentiveness to the one true and living God who speaks to them and receives their praises. God is most beautifully praised when his people hear his word, love his word, and obey his word.”

### **Prayer Meeting became “Optional”**

**Prayer Meeting, as this was being written, is no longer a central part of church life.** The pastor, whose time is taken up with all things recreation and social work services (“Social Gospel,”) does not lead it; I was told that the Prayer Service meets in a small side classroom; as an option to other church training events on Wednesday nights. *Prayer Meeting an option? (In January 2012, Rev. Slayton announced in the pulpit that he would teach “The Circle Maker” heresy, Ted Nance would teach the Book of Micah; while a deacon would lead the Prayer Meeting. Attendance at this “optional” prayer meeting dropped to the extent that, on the week of October 20, 2013, not one person showed up!)* Concerning the fact that the pastor no longer conducts, or is involved in Prayer Meeting at this writing, may I say frankly, there has never been a prayer-less revival. John Wesley said, "God does nothing except by Prayer." What is now being offered for the Worship of God is entertainment, with lip service to God; with the irregular observance of the Lord’s Supper, and only at night; and the church at prayer, is in a side classroom.

### **A Second Major Split**

South Norfolk Baptist, with a quiet pastor-church member relationship for 81 years (Rev. Black through Dr. Brunson), went through a serious “church split” beginning in early 1993, during the early and short tenure of Roger Mardis, an extreme fundamentalist, who did not use expository preaching, who wanted to be “the ruler of the church,” and was more concerned with political issues of the day, like abortion (to the ludicrous extreme of placing many small white crosses across the front lawn of the churchyard on one Sunday)’; than with preaching the Word. He convinced many already-Christian members to be re-baptized. Having no diplomatic interpersonal skills, he was known to ask Deacons who didn’t agree with him, to leave the church.

A “listening session” was scheduled in 1994, with Dr. W.L. Lumpkin, and Dr. H. Edgar Twine. Watching this video taped convocation is informative. It

details the extent to which Rev. Mardis was splitting the congregation. It was immediately apparent that the membership was dissatisfied with this pastor, who in his paranoia, even called me long-distance (on a speaker phone with other unknown members listening to our conversation) to see what I knew about his ongoing myriad problems with the congregation. Answer: nothing; I was pastoring my own congregation at the time; why would I know what was going on with his? Many more revelations, unknown at the time, were to surface later about Roger Mardis, and would lead many to the conclusion, that they had been misled; although some *very few* uninformed older former members still “carry a torch” for this man.

### **My Misjudgment**

I *had* (*past-tense*) been encouraged early on, (and unfortunately, said so publically), as others, that Rev. Slayton would, with the Lord’s leadership, facilitate the expansion and growth of the church membership, based on sound biblical principles, primarily through the expository preaching of the Word. I was, however, disappointed, as were some on the Pulpit Committee, when he became enamored the Richmond Outreach Center (ROC); thinking he could “transplant” into South Norfolk, their flawed “Seeker Sensitive” methodology, which consisted mainly of social work services (“Social Gospel”) coupled with questionable manipulative techniques. The ROC, which does not have Sunday services (except for a Saturday night P&W {Praise & Worship} megachurch-type entertainment), is a strictly social work type organization; it is basically not a church. (More in-depth information on this organization is on the webpage: “The Emergent Church”).

### **Bringing in a “friendly” Mediator**

*South Norfolk Baptist Church is again in the throes of a split* and again held several "listening sessions" in early 2013, to address growing concerns of the congregation. Unknown to most of the congregation, the key mediator, [Rev. Lynn Hardaway](#), was a personal friend of Slayton’s, and was already heavily involved in the problematic “seeker friendly” “Church Growth” methods, that have divided many congregations. He is one of the directors of the “Bridge Network of Churches,” formerly known as the “Norfolk Baptist Association,” to which South Norfolk belongs.

The speaker (Dr. Lynn Hardaway, a “church growth” devotee) on Sunday, May 19, 2013, was part of the “listening process,” but unfortunately, has had a vested interest in the "Church Growth" and “Purpose Driven” movements: with a

degree ("Church Health and Evangelism") from Liberty University, where he was schooled in facilitating churches to "adjust" themselves to the new cultural trends, including "contemporary music." He studied under Ed Stetzer, (who is a devotee of Rick Warren, author of the "The Purpose Driven Life" and "The Purpose Driven Church") and also works for LifeWay SBC in research (specifically looking at ways churches can adapt themselves to today's pagan culture). Another Liberty University visiting professor Lynn Hardaway studied under is Ron Sylvia, who taught at Rick Warren's church promoting the "Purpose Driven Church" methodology; and is heavily involved in the "Emergent Church" movement as it relates to adapting the church to today's culture. (See the webpages: "Seeker Sensitive Heresy" and "Emergent Church Heresy" for more on the connection between Rick Warren and the Muslims; and Rick Warren, Steven Furtick, and Joel Osteen).

Rev. Slayton's classwork at Liberty University in the area of "church planting," included exposure to these two individuals; he is certainly familiar with the Rick Warren methodology, which is taught there, *which includes information on how to get rid of church members who don't agree with you!* (See the webpage: "The Seeker Sensitive Heresy" for more information on that). The pastor and Lynn Hardaway have been close friends for years, which further explains why he brought him into the picture: to support his position of changing the ministry focus of South Norfolk Baptist and adapt to the current culture.

Dr. Lynn Hardaway told South Norfolk Baptist Church at their 11 A.M. service, on May 19, 2013, "They could have a preacher who would visit the hospitals and preach on Sunday if that's what they wanted." (Isn't that part of what the pastor should do? Not according to his philosophy, as given in his Thesis at Liberty Seminary.) Then he told them "That all the churches were going in the same direction; *that the whole world was changing and South Norfolk had to go along with it.*" (But that's not true either. I know of many churches in the Tidewater area, which are not bowing down to this pseudo-theology of the "Church Growth, Seeker Sensitive, Contemporary Worship." I also know of church congregations that have been totally destroyed using those methods which Hardaway and Slayton espouse, i.e. Larchmont Baptist Church, Norfolk, is a prime example of a local area church congregation that was totally destroyed; and the facility dismantled inside: pews and pipe organ removed and a coffee house installed)!

A more objective individual(s) should have been brought in to mediate the on-going conflict between the pastor and congregation; the congregation and

Deacons should still insist on a more objective non-partisan mediator. The Virginia Baptist General Board, located in Richmond, has such individuals available, who are not personal friends with either pastor or people, and can look more objectively at the situation.

**Leadership Meeting**  
 All Sunday School Leaders, Committee Leaders, Ministry Leaders, Deacons  
 Sunday, March 1 - 6:00pm  
 We will discuss the book  
 "Autopsy of a Deceased Church"

**Autopsy of a Deceased Church**  
 12 WAYS TO KEEP YOURS ALIVE  
 Thom S. Rainer

**After the morning sermon: "Why Not Give Up," which has a subtle reference to Pastor Slayton as Moses leading the congregation out "of the wilderness" with all of their complaining and bellyaching; members are treated on Sunday night, to "Autopsy of a Deceased Church," which is a direct reference to South Norfolk Baptist.**

**For Shock Effect?**

**Recalling what Dr. Carson said about how a church is destroyed, let me suggest that the "Sheep Beating" that occurred in the March 1st sermon, followed by discussing Rainer's book, deserves some observations.**

**First and foremost, there is no way you can listen to a tape of that sermon, followed by a discussion of the "Autopsy" book, know the intimate background of the current infighting between pastor and people, and not come to a conclusion.**

**Now, let's take a look at that "gem" which was presented to the "leadership" on Sunday night. Rainer's book deserves careful scrutiny:**

The authorial intent is both noble and heartfelt. Rainer has developed much time to the study of church health. His text could have been developed further into an in-depth study worthy of publication, or simply reduced to a pamphlet size

handout. Unfortunately, the results rest in a hazy middle ground that could have many readers disappointed for different reasons. A substantial flaw in the book comes from the small number of samples examined. 14 churches is not enough to definitely declare what causes a church to die. Regional diversity, cultural milieus, ethnic makeup, rigid pastoral authority, and myriad other influential factors could change the results substantially, and call for a larger sampling size.

The book unfortunately rests on pragmatic observation, than Biblical theology. Rather than contrast the Biblical foundations laid out in scripture with the deceased churches, the author uses his observational studies to draw conclusions. Only after a list is composed does he seek to go back into the Bible for support. Sometimes an explanation is easy and other times, it is unattainable. While providing good solid principles, the book should not be the foundational resource to which one turns for a church rescue....if South Norfolk is at that point.

In the Rainer book, I saw plenty of concern about churches that seemed unwilling to "change with the times," but no concern about changing just to go with the flow, and spending funds to put in coffee bars, expensive "stage" and sound equipment, playgrounds, and recreation programs, to make the church the "in" place to be.

There is not much in the way of serious case study in this book: can God be so powerless that 1/2 of the churches in America are dying? Am I so powerful that I can destroy God's desire for the churches' in America? I doubt it.

One Pastor gave this tongue-in-cheek review: "Once again, I sense a pastor looking for a quick fix. If he has been in ministry any time at all, he knows his stuff. Your church is clueless or it wouldn't be in the mess it's in. They sure don't want to hear it. What they do want is a new coach with the magic moves. If you take this to a deacon meeting, make sure you've already reserved your U-Haul for moving day. Give up on denominational churches, retire early, before you stroke out trying to lead one of these monsters, get a clean New Testament to devour, and get a fresh understanding of what church really is. And do not plant a church when you emerge from your cave. Bacon and eggs around a kitchen table with a neighbor who has never been a church goer might be a good way to start your life, post "church." Whole lot cheaper than gospel blimps. But, we aren't in this for our health, so eat the bacon and eggs, and get back to work. Ministry is not for sissies. But skip this book."

There is nothing new or groundbreaking within the pages. I found it to be terribly dismal offering little hope, a few scriptures thrown in, and a rather condescending attitude to boot. Church splits, greed, desire to be "mega," a place of judgment with



egotistical "little Napoleon" pastors, pastors who preach heresy, is what leads to death.

He does paint a good picture of a dying church. He does not address the other kind of dying church: the church that goes apostate with a pastor who preaches heresy.

In summation, the book doesn't offer the in depth solutions that are needed. Rainer follows the "Purpose Driven" Church Health "Seeker Sensitive" *mantra* that a congregation's liturgy (way of worship) must be subject to change to attract outsiders, and inflexibility in the area of worship ritual can be deadly; so change or die. There is no wiggle room in the book's analysis for those traditions that have deep theological reasons, hammered out over multiple centuries, for their set liturgy and way of worship.

Rainer claims to be a consultant, but he only told *one story* of showing up, condemning a church, and walking away. If he is such a good consultant, how about some success stories? The advice on how to save a church is vague and impossible to apply (the Great Commission is not local). There was no information on how to fix it.

Also, I have to ask, since mega churches are a recent phenomenon, maybe God likes small churches and the bigger a church is, the more sick it is. Since the Bible never comments on church size, we can never know.

Churches were designed for feeding the saints and equipping them for service on an individual basis, and not necessarily on a corporate one.

Perhaps a better tack for the current pastor would have been to skip the book, preach a good sermon without grandstanding and "Sheep Beating," and, if necessary, bring in a non-controversial, not-a-personal-friend consultant from the Virginia Baptist General Board in Richmond.

### **What I have Observed**

Over the past several years, I attended Worship services at South Norfolk when in town. The last time I visited, it was a noisy affair, starting at 10:45 AM, with children running up and down the aisles of the church auditorium; with some adults following the example of the Pastor involved in emotional unbiblical charismatic hand-raising during the singing of the mindless "7-11 hymns" (7 words sung 11 times, projected on a theater screen); "Contemporary Music" (the major focus of the time spent in "worship") led by teenagers playing rock band instruments, in street-bum dress; *with no reading of the Bible, and not one Prayer*

***was offered, except by a Deacon....for the Offering!* It was a *performance*, with the non-expository sermon starting at 12 Noon!**

On still another occasion, when I visited South Norfolk Baptist in 2012, the worship service began at 10:45 and ended at 12:45. ***Again, only one time was Prayer offered....when a Deacon was again asked to pray for the offering!*** After 15 minutes of announcements, "7-11 hymns" were sung to words projected on a screen, while the congregation remained standing throughout; then a break for the offering, followed by the musical "number" by the casually dressed choir; then, the pastor got up to preach at 11:45! Several in the congregation had been standing on their feet so long, that they had to sit down, or leave. The service didn't end until 1 P.M.

Several members of the church have approached the Pastor; including one adult Sunday School class. He heard them out, *and then stated flatly that he was not about to change*, concerning the many matters discussed here.

After moving the "traditional service" to 8:30 A.M. on Sunday morning, *which intentionally killed the attendance, and led to it's planned demise (and is straight out of the "Purpose Driven" methodology)*, and moving the "contemporary service" to 11:00 A.M.; ***then getting rid of the last full time Minister of Music called and employed by the church; pushed out the door in 2012, because of Slayton's theological concerns over a woman with a seminary degree leading the music program, and his wanting to use the "7-11 hymns" only, and not over financial concerns as he stated.*** Then, following Rick Warren's "Purpose Driven Church" method, he handpicked a "worship leader" to direct the rock & roll contemporary music.

During this service, I have personally observed, Rev. Slayton, wrongly practice the Charismatic "lifting up holy hands" and encourage the congregation to do the same. He is leading the flock astray. Let me be clear: *This is an unbiblical, charismatic, false teaching.*

**With the use of rock and roll musical instruments,  
With the introduction of charismatic-type worship and music  
by the Pastor,  
With the observed lack of decorum in the congregation,  
With the observed indecent behavior by some of the teenagers  
in the balcony .....which led to having adult "monitors" assigned.....**



(View from balcony of South Norfolk Baptist Church just after Slayton came as pastor and *prior to current decline in attendance; and before what the long-serving members knew what he was up to.*)

**.....the standard of music has been lowered,  
the standard of dress has been lowered,  
the standard of conduct has been lowered, and  
the sense of value in God's truth has been lowered.**

### **What other Pastors, Ordained at South Norfolk Baptist, have Observed**

I have spoken personally with several men, who were formerly ordained at South Norfolk, who are now retired, but had come back for a visit. One man told me that on the 50th anniversary of his Ordination at South Norfolk, he went back to attend a service, and was so shocked by what he observed, that he walked out of the service after 10 minutes. He described it exactly as I have.

### **What former Pastors, Who have Preached, at South Norfolk Baptist, have Said**

If you listen to the Sermon, "Hindrances to Renewal," in the Audio section of this website, you will hear from Rev. Frank Hughes, as to what is necessary. He preached from the book of Nehemiah. In that sermon, he references the 1985 edition of the Baptist Hymnal, that was released, and some of the liberal opposition that surfaced, when the hymns were being selected for it. As you listen to the music in the audio section, you will hear the once-used hymns of the faith, at South Norfolk Baptist Church.

Listen to Rev. Sam Tatem preaching in the audio section, "A Protracted Meeting," you will hear a sermon on why the hymns of the church are important. I can only hope that the leadership at SNBC will find its way back to that music of hymns, which uplifts the soul, speaks to the unsaved, as well as the Christian in

need; and exalts the Savior.

Dr. Mac Brunson preaches an early sermon, in the audio section “Go, Reach, Win.” You will hear him explain what will grow a church. (Hint: it isn’t entertainment in a worship service).

I make absolutely no apology in writing this paper on “Worship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” not only because Dad would agree with me, and said so, before he passed (as we both witnessed the growing trend of casual Contemporary Music and Worship in South Norfolk Baptist, *after* Dr. Mac Brunson left, and more intensely since Rev. Slayton arrived); but it is obvious that we have modern day secular hindrances in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which many pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention, have allowed to enter into the Worship of God, resulting in the stunted growth of the church; hindrances in the use of gimmicks and music, that does not honor the Lord. Many Southern Baptist Seminary presidents are now speaking out against this trend.

With the current drop in Protestant church attendance recently reported by the Pew Charitable Trust, as of 2012, and indeed the loss of attendance at South Norfolk of young and senior adults who feel they are being left behind, in the rush to cater to young people of one ethnic background; what they need today is renewal in personal Bible study, prayer life, witnessing, and worship. It takes dedication of door-to-door visitation (*to every age group and every ethnic group, and not just minority blacks*) in South Norfolk and Portlock; with church members, *and the Pastor leading the way*, willing to work in fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). As my grandfather, Rev. J. Leighton Read would say, “A word to the wise is sufficient.”

### **What is the true Worship of God?**

My thanks to Dr. Will Willimon, who, in his two books, “Preaching and Worship in the Small Church” and “The Gospel for the person who has everything,” concisely views what is wrong with Contemporary Worship when viewed in diagram format.

Kierkegaard said that he might think of the worship in our churches on Sunday morning, as if it were a drama, taking place in a theater. So, I draw a theater floor plan below on the next page, with the stage at one end, and the audience at the other end. If you ask a typical member of a congregation to list the participants in a usual Sunday morning worship service, they will usually list those

who participate in an arrangement something like the first diagram. With nearly every group in which I have used this analogy, this is the way the drama of worship is arranged:

THE WORSHIP THEATER (space):

Stage Minister, Praise Team, Worship Leader, Praise Band, Instrumentalists, Ushers
Audience Congregation

There is one problem: Where is God? He has been left out of worship. We have set up worship, as if it were a performance by the “actors” (minister, praise team or choir, etc.) for the sole benefit of the “audience” (congregation). In this model/format, the only way to judge the effectiveness of worship is to judge how well the congregation likes it; and that is usually how we judge worship.

Let's change the arrangement of the Worship Theater (space) so that it looks like this:

Stage: Minister, Choir, Choir Director, Organist, Congregation
Audience: God

Now that changes things. God is brought into the worship service! This new arrangement, says that most of the singing, praying, talking, eating and drinking (during the Lord's Supper), which we do on Sunday morning, is addressed to God, not to ourselves.

The true measure of worship is not so much what it does to or for us. The true test is *what worship says to, and about God*. Adoration, mystery, awe, wonder, sacrifice, offering, thanksgiving, and praise are often missing from our public worship, because we have made *ourselves*, rather than *God*, the object of our worship. If we focused more upon God, if our worship became a song of our beliefs about God, if it again became a response to the working out of our salvation by the One who truly heals us, then we would have something to sing about!

**Dr. Peter Masters, Baptist Pastor of Metropolitan Tabernacle (Spurgeon's) in central London, wrote:** "First, the adoption of new worship, with all its compromises of principle, could be an act of great pastoral insensitivity and cruelty, destroying in the young, all sense of separation from the world, and delivering them into the power of secular culture. How can they expect to keep their personal lives clear of sinful, worldly culture, if this is incorporated in the worship of their church? Never, before the present era, have evangelical churches considered adopting anything quite like this.

"With the adoption of new CCM-style (Contemporary Church Music) worship, individual churches may dramatically change character in the months and years ahead. Where will your church be ten or twenty years from now? Will it be a lightweight, frothy, entertainment-based community, drinking from this world's fountains, and stripped of all the strengths of truly biblical Christianity? Will it have become a charismatic church, with worshippers either dancing or falling in the aisles? Will it be unrecognizable as a once conservative, Bible-loving fellowship? Or will it still be standing for the Truth by the power of God?"

"How many churches will be lost to the old biblical ways through worldly worship? The great tragedy is already taking place with significant fellowships becoming 'new evangelical' and charismatic in towns and cities everywhere. May God help us to cherish and guard the great principles of worship expressed in His Word, rediscovered at the Reformation, and kept by millions over so many generations. May we prove the Lord in loyalty to them. May we be faithful to our charge as pastors and church officers.

"Scripture matters. Principles count. The Lord must be loved and obeyed in all things. Never let anyone take away your biblical worship. Whatever the cost, hold on to God-focused worship, untainted by fleshly inventions, until the Great Day dawns, and the shadows flee away. And we look with rapture on our King, Whose all-surpassing glory will be unobscured by the things of the world for all eternity." ("Worship in the Melting Pot" by Dr. Peter Masters. London: The Wakeman Trust, 2002).

What does it take to grow a church? Is it a Wild Game Supper with door prizes? Worldly recreation, like a pool table or secular dance classes? Is it entertaining rock & roll Contemporary Music, to entice the unsaved into a worship service, that ignores God; ignores the Christians, who come to Worship God? Is it sermons that are aimed primarily to unsaved youth of only one ethnic background, to the exclusion of the Christians who have come to be spiritually fed the Word? Is it a football team, or some different worldly gimmick, that supplants the basic tenants of worship?

The question when our worship services are over is not how much did the pagan enjoy that, but what did they learn from that. Not how "electric" was the atmosphere, but how clear was the Gospel? If people are being awakened to their need of God, they will listen to preaching. And if they're not, then no amount of "Gospel" entertainment or evangelistic gimmickry will make them listen. If it's not going to do be done God's way, it's not going to be done.

*Postscript, July 2016*

Since this original position paper was written, several major changes have occurred in 2012-2016, at South Norfolk Baptist Church; and some of them theologically unsound; and some of them pure heresy. I believe that the church is now hopelessly tangled beyond all help, except that which God can provide. I cannot remember ever hearing about any church that had the number of problems created by one pastor. I cannot remember hearing of any pastor consistently teaching such heresy as I have found this man doing.

Like a pebble thrown into a pool of water, the ripples have reached out far from the shore, and much that has been done, cannot be undone, unless this man can fully understand the part he has played, and come to terms with the situation. In listening to 4 “Eisegetical” sermons, with the “Sheep Beating” (which is not “teaching the members how to behave,” as has been wrongly interpreted by one or two individuals), it is so apparent that he feels he is not in any way, at fault.

A few have said that they are not concerned about his “theology” but his programs; they think “his heart is in the right place.” One or two of these previously stated that he was too well-entrenched with his supporters and would not change. This shows a lack of real spiritual discernment on their part. For one to “overlook” the theology; to ignore the heresy he continues to bring into the pulpit, even now in January 2016, is to overlook the Lord Jesus, who has given clear Biblical instructions for the work of His church, and the work of His shepherds, the Pastors. Some in the Norfolk Baptist Association (now called the Bridge Network of Churches) have finally woken up to the realization that he is teaching false doctrine, and have spoken with me about it. I had always hoped he would stop beating the drum week after week, sermon after sermon, for his pet “social gospel” mission’s projects (aka “SHRMP”), and return to preaching the Word, and God would bless the church.

But he continued this in his January 4, 2015 sermon, stating that the church had to be “relevant” to the unsaved people in the community, in order to attract them in; that “most of the churches in the area had empty pews.” But how wrong he is! I have attended a church in the Tidewater area that continues to support traditional worship with Bible preaching, hymns that speak to the heart, and music that stirs the soul....and the pews are not empty! They are filled week after week; and young adults....with children attend! On one Sunday in 2015, I counted 32 Deacons present for a Deacon Ordination Service! I do not prognosticate nor am I given to prophesy, but if I did, I would predict that if Rev. Slayton continues the



way he is going, with “Sheep Beating” sermons that start out with some folksy story about himself, segue into Scripture that is not properly “handled” (see 2 Timothy 2:15); and in some recent cases, misquoted and misinterpreted; then, which end up promoting his “Social Gospel” ministries, aka “SHRMP,” while *reading himself into the Scripture* viz personal folksy stories, week after week, *the pews in his church* will be empty!

His use of heresy has continued into 2016, with his preaching which incorporates the heretical philosophy of Bishop N.T. Wright; and teaching a book by known heretic Dallas Willard, a “Universalist.” Simply unbelievable.....and it seems that the congregation is none the wiser, or if they are, they don’t care.

***I sum up with the following salient points:***

- *The official SNBC website/Facebook page continued, until November 2014, to endorse, (with the pastor’s approval) several unbiblical and heretical “Emergent/Seeker Sensitive” churches, who engage in blasphemous and heretical practices*, including: NewSpring Church (S.C.), Bethel Church (Redding, CA.), Mars Hill Church (Seattle, WA.), and the Richmond Outreach Center (Richmond, VA). Pastor David Slayton at South Norfolk Baptist has been approached about this, and has rebuffed the individuals, including the congregation publically from the pulpit, as he considers this unimportant. His model for ministry at South Norfolk Baptist includes and remains, the “Seeker Sensitive” and “Purpose Driven” culturally non-Gospel entertainment ‘worship’ methodology of the heretical Richmond Outreach Center. (Details about the heresy practiced and “preached” in these churches can be found on the page “The Emergent Church” on this website. (He recently did *Damage Control* in early 2015, and removed the information.)
- *Rev. Slayton has publically endorsed, in the pulpit, the heresy of “Name it---Claim-it” “Prosperity Gospel” theology, and the wrong way to pray, found in “The Circle Maker” book, authored by Mark Batterson, an “Emergent Post-modern” ‘pastor’ of a mega-church in Washington, D.C. (This heresy is a subset of the “Prosperity Gospel” preaching of TV preachers, like Joyce Meyer, Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, and Joel Osteen). Faithfully preaching and teaching the Word must be the very heart of a pastor’s ministry philosophy. Any other*

*approach* replaces the voice of God with human wisdom. He taught the book, starting in January 2012. He has also introduced the false teaching of Bonhoeffer and Blackaby; and ‘preached’ Eisegetical sermons, that included “sheep beating” and “name calling.” One individual told me recently that, “Well, that was back in 2012.” So? Has he publicly repented of teaching and personally believing this heresy? No; he still believe, preaches, and practices that false method of prayer! **He continued to “double down” and again endorse this heresy in a January 2015 sermon.** His sermons in February continued to be eisegetical in nature; a brief scripture verse or two, then launching into folksy illustrations, with the subrosa agenda of promoting and propagating his own “Vision Casting” of what he wanted the church to do. (Such as was evident in the recent sermon “Quiet, Listen”).

- ***In 2015, he endorsed heretic Gene Edwards.***
- ***In 2016, he endorsed heretic Dallas Willard.***
- ***In 2016, he used the theology of heretic N.T. Wright.***
- ***Rev. Slayton, please read Rev. Frank Hughes’ sermon: “The Preacher in his Pulpit” with the scripture text from Jonah 3. You are in serious error proclaiming heresy from the pulpit, and will, someday, be held accountable for this grievous sin of leading men and women, young people, and boys and girls, astray.***
- I simply do not understand why a pastor would abdicate this solemn privilege....why proclaim the wisdom of men, like the false teaching of “The Circle Maker” instead of preaching the Word of God. The preacher’s task is *not* to be a conduit for the human wisdom like that of “Honi the circle maker” who is the central fictional character from the Jewish Talmud, used in this book, by Mark Batterson. *No human message comes with the stamp of divine authority...only the Word of God. How can any preacher substitute another message? Proclaiming the Gospel, preaching the Word, is the pastor’s calling. This pastor needs to repent of this sin, or else resign, so that the real work of the Lord may go forward.*

- *Rev. Slayton has endorsed the heretical teaching of Bonhoeffer as the way to “do church.” If only the church Pulpit Committee and congregation had known all this in advance....because a lot of what he is doing is “re-making” the church; undoing years of sound doctrinal preaching; and replaced with un-sound theology, and that of known and verifiable heretics.*
- *Worship has become entertainment...Hip-Hop, Rap, Dance.* Services have become ill planned and thoughtlessly entered into. The bulletin became a disorganized sheet, with no order of worship; that mostly promoted his *social gospel* programs. The focus is now, not on God (as worship in the Bible clearly always is) but on man. “Church Growth” specialists, like Lynn Hardaway, talk about “seeker-friendly” worship, which finds out what unconverted people like, and then, give it to them in your worship services. But evangelism cannot be reduced to any program, technique, or marketing approach. Being well entrenched in the television age, the worship service, we are told should be fast-paced with lots of variety. The *congregation* has become an *audience*. The “worship leader,” the rock & roll band, and pastor, have become *actors on a stage*, and the service has become a *performance*. This *weak* form of “worship” is a symptom of an inadequate theology. Specifically, it betrays a deficient view of God, and a misunderstanding of the essence and basis of worship itself. In this “seeker-friendly” model, the cure is more deadly than the disease.
- *The church has lost its doctrinal moorings.* The pastor is trying to replace genuine spiritual power with man-made schemes, like those of the “Church Growth” “Seeker Sensitive” movements, and Rick Warren. God-honoring worship has been marginalized or neglected with the omission of the ministry of the Word, as manifested through exposition and public reading of Scripture in worship. This I have observed for myself: ***in the last three morning services I attended, there was no public reading of God’s Word! There was no prayer by the Pastor, except by a deacon for the offering!*** It is apparent to me that he was never interested in the work of the true Church of Christ, but in “social work” and using “seeker sensitive/church growth” heretical methods to attract the pagan into the church, including pandering to one ethnic age group. (Including a Deacon who has to have music played by the praise team before he can pray....which distracts the solemnity of worship.)

- In the opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the church in America is in desperate need of a biblical and theological Reformation. We need to return to basic principles. Historic principles. Principles that served the Southern Baptist Convention well in its formative years. We need a Reformation in both our faith and practice.
- *The pastor has lulled the congregation into believing that anything that will draw a crowd, should be allowed, even if it means allowing sin into the church, such as the installation of a pool table and secular dance classes. It reminds me of a sermon my Dad preached, "Sin is to blame." How ironic, that sin has been deliberately INTRODUCED INTO THE CHURCH by the current pastor!* In an attempt to achieve cultural relevance, the church is becoming essentially irrelevant. As Os Guinness points out, "the seductive promise of relevance is, in reality, the road to irrelevance." ("Dining with the Devil," 1993). He is preaching and programing a "Social Gospel" and not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- *When South Norfolk markets itself like the world,* with worldly amusements, entertainment, recreation, and music; the distinctiveness of its message is lost, and the Gospel and Word of God, is irretrievably compromised. The entertainment value may be high, attracting temporary throngs, but the eternal value is conspicuously absent, as those same people go home unchallenged and unchanged. The quest for cultural relevance is contrary to everything the Bible teaches about church ministry. The pastor is called to preach the Word of God, without the notion of political correctness, and undiluted by the preacher's own ideas, and not adapted to the spirit of the age.
- *Rev. Slayton has contributed to lowering the dignity of his "pastoral office,"* by allowing members, including youth, to informally call him by his first name, i.e., "Pastor David" and having the same printed in the church worship bulletin, in attempt to be informal; in the "I'm one of you" mentality; "I'm just one of the gang"; this in addition to letting one and all, have his cell phone number, which is also a sign of poor time management (as evidenced when I had a conversation with him, in early 2012, which was interrupted by a phone call to his cell phone, from a youth, who wanted information about the football program). Even older church members call him "David." Casualness

is *not* an example of intimacy with God.

- The typical Southern Baptist Church focuses much of its Sunday morning sermon towards a ‘*decision point*.’ (*By the way, every sermon should be focused towards getting the people to make some kind of decision*). The problem is, typically this decision point has to do with ‘*getting saved*.’ I’ve noticed that in the last two years, that **Rev. Slayton’s sermons that Eisegete Scripture and manipulate Bible verses, have consistently and increasingly focused on the lowest common denominator in the pews: the lost pagan. Real Biblical teaching and preaching has fallen by the wayside.** (*This is the fruit of a broken “Seeker Sensitive” “Church Growth” evangelism model that thinks the lost pagan should be enticed, by whatever means to us, to hear the Gospel, all the while, the Christian who has come to Worship, is ignored*). Instead of focusing Sunday Worship Services on teaching and imploring the saints to adore and magnify their God, the pastor is spending time trying to attract pagans into the pews, to ‘*make a decision*’; one, statistics reveal, they’ll forsake in a few months time.
- When you turn the worship service into a theatrical device designed to attract, entertain, and ultimately manipulate pagans to do something they don’t want to do, the pastor is inevitably (*though perhaps, out of sincere motives*) working towards the paganization of the Church.
- People need *red meat*. Christians need to be taught *the full counsel of God*. But the pastor is letting them languish on the vine, when he spends more time seeking to attract the pagans, than he does seeking to instruct the believers. Remember, what you do to attract them to Church, you’ll have to continue to do, to keep them. (*Something one mega-church [Willow Creek] sadly found out*). *The rule of thumb is: worship happens in the pews, evangelism happens in the streets.*
- Make Sunday a day of worship again. Make the hour of worship an actual time of worship again. Then go out to the marketplace, to the communities, to the streets, and take the all-encompassing Gospel of peace and grace to the pagan world. (*My thanks to former Southern Baptist missionary, Rev. Josh Miller, for his insight into this problem*).
- ***The “missional-community/church-growth movement” is deceptive.*** I

have personally heard participants in some churches feel like they are stalwart conservatives in a Bible-believing, Gospel-proclaiming, Hell-reducing Kingdom-expanding church. “My preacher really preaches the Bible.” True, their preacher does hold up a Bible and talk about how true and authoritative it is. He even quotes from the Bible fairly consistently (“I know the plans I have for you...I will never leave you nor forsake you...I am come that you might have life more abundantly...(and, of course) bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse”). What those church members do not know is that they have adopted the leftist agenda (socialism/Social Gospel) or neo-con agenda (reconstructing a Christian society) which is as empty as it has always been. The educational ministry of a church cannot simply be about social-work services and recreation to unbelievers in the community. The fellowship of believers who desire to grow in the Word and Worship God cannot be left behind.

- *With a letter, dated August 2014, sent to the Church Members, from the Finance Committee, indicating a serious financial crisis looming, I think it is time for Rev. Slayton to spend more time in his study and return to Preaching the Word; omit his time devoted to “Social Gospel” social-work programs; commit to a service of Worship that is Worship and not entertainment; and start reaching the adults and young adults in the South Norfolk/Portlock communities who are lost, and will go to Hell without Christ; to being a Pastor, and not also an “Urban Missionary” as reported in a recent issue of the “Bridge Network of Churches” newsletter, which diverts his time away from his primary calling as a Pastor. In January 2016, I saw the pastor and a deacon from another Baptist church in the area, going thru the Portlock area, door-to-door; inviting people to church! This is what is called “personal work” among evangelists....and why on earth is Slayton, who lives in Portlock, not doing the same where he lives?*

*My wife agrees with me, that it is only a matter of time, before the church will have to close it's doors if the seriousness of the matter is not realized, and changes are not quickly made. The situation reminds me of a poem, a quote, and a verse of Scripture:*

*Robert Burns wrote in the poem, “To a Louse, on Seeing one on a Lady’s bonnet in Church,” the following words, here in standard English:*

“And would some Power the small gift give us  
 To see ourselves as others see us!  
 It would from many a blunder free us,  
 And foolish notion:  
 What airs in dress and gait would leave us,  
 And even devotion!”

*John Haywood wrote: “There are none so blind as those who will not see. The most deluded people are those who choose to ignore what they already know.”*

*Jeremiah 5:21: “Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not.”*

- **Do the church members know their Bible?** Can they give a defense of attacks against it? Can they rightly divide the Word of Truth? Do they have a Biblical worldview that understands creation, eschatology, salvation (Jesus as propitiatory sacrifice), grace (free from the Law), and so much more? Have you developed a congregation that could, and would, stick with it through a months-long study of the book of Numbers? Or Joshua? If you have not developed this kind of Biblical hunger, then you’ve just allowed them to be deceived by thinking they’ve had Bible study, experienced worship, with a heretical way to pray (“The Circle Maker”), and come away a better (and more Christ-like) person. Since all pastors will stand before God someday and be judged for reality (not feelings), will you be satisfied to spend your time and energy developing a Biblically-literate congregation?
- **Then, I never thought I'd live to see this: *the pipe organ console moved into a side classroom, in 2012, at Rev. Slayton's direction.*** Although the organ was already in playable condition, the pastor turned down an offer to have it completely restored by a non-profit organization for free (a \$50,000 gift). I was told they wanted to make room for more rock & roll instruments and "praise singers." (One member told me they thought it was moved at the direction of the “Property Committee.” That is incorrect. With his rigid and unbending personality, *nothing* happens in this church without Rev. Slayton’s approval and at his direction; the organ console was moved *at his direction and at his direction only*).

- With a recent “Sheep Beating” 2015 sermon detailing his outrage over an item being discussed in a Sunday School class; that he has been in private discussions with an individual(s) which he cannot reveal due to pastor-penitent law, we must now assume that Church Discipline is not alive and well at South Norfolk. My overarching question is, why even mention that in the pulpit? That is simply unprofessional for the pastor of a church!
- I believe this rigid and inflexible personality started at an early age: when he started his own ‘church’ as a 9 year-old, in his backyard, complete with pulpit robe, altar, and even a ‘constitution’ he had written; assigning positions of leadership in his “church,” i.e., to the other youngsters who attended his “church. He told the reporter that this was a REAL church, not a play church. He even practiced baptism! He named it “Central Un-denominational Church” which is a clue to his thinking about how the work of a church is organized in a denominational setting; which is not at all, except as he directs. Here are two newspaper articles that described it, and give vital clues to his psychological makeup as a future pastor, *and please note, he states that he is not playing church; he sees it as reality:*







RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Inside the rough-hewn sanctuary of "David's Church" in Richmond, there are only two rules: No eating, no bare feet.

Here, twice each Sunday and once on Wednesday nights, eight pint-sized parishioners gather to sing from battered hymnals and to listen to their "pastor," David Slayton, preach.

David is 10 years old. The oldest of his parishioners is 11, the youngest 5.

The church — "Central Un-denominational Church," David calls it — is in actuality a pine bark covered playhouse in the back yard of the home of David's parents in Westover Hills.

David founded his church about a year ago, and to him and the little members of his congregation, it is no laughing matter.

"The idea of it is to get more people of any age to God," David explains as he stands by his "sanctuary" in the

long, white ministerial robes he wears for each worship service.

"We aren't playing. We're having this because the world needs Christianity. You know the kind of things you read in the newspapers.

"In the big churches, people my age and littler don't get up at the altar and say things to the congregation because they might look silly. But they can at our church."

Inside the playhouse, there's an altar — a green toy stove, topped with a white towel and a Bible. A blue plastic cross stands before the altar, which is flanked by the Christian and American flags.

David's "flock" consists of his sister Beth, 6, and neighbors Carol and Jimmy Perdue, aged 11 and 5; George Islip, 7; Susan LaPrade, 7, and Steven and Ann Ford, aged 8 and 10.

The children attend various Methodist, Roman Catholic and

Episcopal churches with their parents for more formal worship. But at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. each Sunday they gather at "David's Church" for services, and at 5 p.m. each Wednesday there's prayer meeting.

David has things quite well organized. Carol is church secretary. Beth is choir director, a logical assignment because she also happens to be the whole "choir." George is usher.

David, Carol and Ann make up a board that decides church policy and brings recommendations before the congregation for a vote.

David's mother says he's been a fledgling preacher for almost as long as she can remember.

"Ever since he was big enough to talk," Mrs. Slayton says, the family would take him to Central United Methodist Church and "he would come home and preach, repeating the sermon he heard."

## Richmond Times-Dispatch

Thursday, September 7, 1972

Staff Photos by P. A. Gormus Jr.

Layout by Masaaki Okada



David Edwards Slayton, 10 1/2, Extends a Dignified Welcome to His Backyard Congregation



Jimmy Perdue, 5, Quietly Gives Thanks

*It's a children's church,  
there's no steeple,  
open the door and see  
all the little people.*

*They call it ...*

# David's Church

Six Westover Hills children pack inside a 4x6-foot pre-fabricated log-cabin playhouse while two more sit in lawn chairs just outside a paneless window for services at 2 and 5 p.m. each Sunday and prayer meeting at 5 p.m. on Wednesdays. The faithful follow a written order of service with high-pitched-singing from battered hymnals, mumbling over a rough word like "righteous" in the responsive reading, and concise preaching by the church's pastor, 10-year-old David Edwards Slayton.

Colloquially known as "David's Church," Central Undenominational Church was founded about a year ago by young Slayton in his backyard.

"The idea of it is to get more people of any age to God," said the serious David.

**NOW NO ONE** may use the little house for anything but church services. The two rules for inside the sanctuary are no eating and no bare feet.

The altar, a green toy stove topped with a well-used white towel and a Bible, is but an adult arm's length from the front door. A royal blue Styrofoam cross with sprigs of artificial flowers stands before the altar, and a Christian and American flag stand on either side.

Religious prints and penciled signs such as "Reading is fun! so read the Bible" are tacked inside and out. A cross made of wood scraps identifies the nearby graveyard for two departed crabs.

The pint-sized preacher's parish has doubled from the founding four to an evangelical eight.

His flock consists of his sister Beth, 6, Carol and Jimmy Perdue, ages 11 and 5, George Islip, 7, Susie LaPrade, 7, and Steven and Ann Ford, ages 8 and 10. The children attend various Methodist, Catholic, and Episcopal churches with their families.

**ACCEPTANCE** of two beliefs on childlike faith precedes admission into the congregation.

"You have to believe in Jesus Christ, that He died on the cross for our sins and that He is the Son of God, was crucified, rose again and will come again," said David.

Secondly, an applicant for church membership "must believe in the Bible, every word, read this Book, keep it and not throw it around."

David baptizes new members by sprinkling.

He explains the advantage of belonging to Central Undenominational: "In the big churches people my age and littler don't get up at the altar and say things to the congregation because they might look silly. But they can at our church."

**IN FACT**, the Sunday evening service is designed to give the other members "a chance to speak their feelings." The church has a board composed of David, Carol, and Ann. After bi-monthly meetings the board "decides what the church is" and brings future plans before the congregation for a vote.

Carol is also church secretary. Beth is not only the choir director, she is the entire "choir." George is the usher.

David remains preacher and the one who baptizes because of congregational vote.

Would a girl ever be voted minister? "NO," emphatically states David. "In school we learn that God made man and then woman," he said. "I believe men should preach and teach and the girls can be in the choir, secretaries, and missionaries. All of us are missionaries really."

**DAVID AND BETH** attend the private Warwick Christian Day School, where his favorite subject is Bible "because it's a lot of fun and I like that sort of thing." He avidly reads outdoor church bulletin boards for sermon ideas. Some of his borrowed topics have been "What We As Christians Should Do," "Defeating the Devil," and "God Forgives."

At the age of 5 weeks David was taken to Sunday School at Central United Methodist Church, his mother said. "Ever since he was almost big enough to talk David would come home and preach, repeating the sermon," she added.

David's parents are both workers in Central Methodist, the prototype for Central Undenominational.

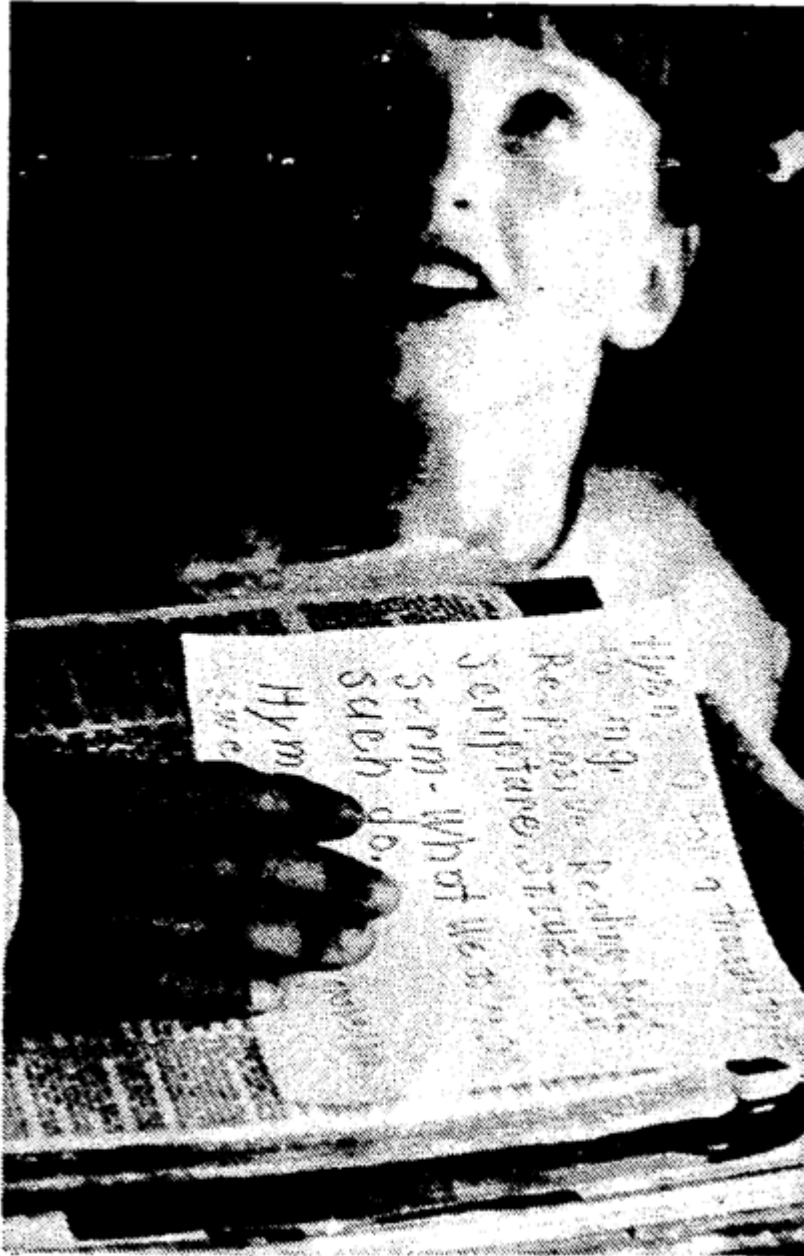
Their pastor, L. P. Foley, recently was invited to wedge himself into David's church for participation in its first homecoming or "Church Get-Together."

**AFTER A TYPICAL** half hour worship service, the congregation and visitor ate a picnic lunch, and then trooped into the Slaytons' basement for a song service at the piano.

David, who insists on "dressing with dignity" in a suit and robe, becomes mildly indignant when asked if the church is merely play-acting. "We aren't playing," he said, "we're having this because the world needs Christianity. You know the kind of things you read in the newspapers."

David's opening prayer was "Dear Lord, we ask that You be with us this day and help us do as we should. We thank You for this beautiful day...help us carry on this church for the rest of our lives."

Beth, the choir, closed the service with the old hymn "Amazing Grace" as David fervently shook everyone's hand outside the door.



**David Believes the Bible's 'Every Word'**  
**Beth Slayton Listens to Brother's Sermon**

- After mailing him a copy of this position paper, I had a personal conversation with Rev. Slayton in 2012. (I refuse to call him by the unprofessional “Pastor David”). He said he was *not* interested in having the organ restored. *One deacon called me on the phone long-distance, and offered to sell me the organ, which he had no right to do!* I am sorry that adults, young people and children growing up in the South Norfolk area, will not be able to hear this historic Henry Pilcher's Sons pipe organ. (In fact, I know that the console Swell Pedal was vandalized in December 2007). This is a rich religious musical heritage that is being lost, not to mention the losing of the theological message, in the hymns. *(One currently serving Virginia Baptist minister, who knows the complete history of David Slayton’s background, and rigid personality in church work, told me that Rev. Slayton would never change his views, and was surprised that he hadn’t taken all the pews out of the auditorium)!*



Pipe Organ console moved into a side classroom of the auditorium, 2012.

### *Some Concluding Thoughts*

*I am grieved at the introduction of sinful practices and heresy into the church I grew up in; in the church where my father preached the Word, and who abstained from allowing anything in the church, that even had the appearance of evil; in the church my brother Jim and I made a Profession of Faith; in the church where we were Baptized. I am grateful that my Father and Mother did not live to see what has happened in and to this church he served for so long.*

*I am grieved at the prayerlessness in the church: the lack of an active Prayer Meeting; a Prayer Meeting that has become optional; that the Pastor does not support or lead. The Lord's Supper is inconsistently observed, and mostly at night. The Gospel message of Jesus Christ has been diluted, now with the introduction of "Prosperity Gospel," "Name it—Claim it" "The Circle Maker," a false way to pray, and other heresy in the pulpit and the classroom. A "Social Gospel" is now used for the Educational Ministry; secular and sinful practices have now been introduced, to entice the unsaved pagan; trying to be "Seeker-Sensitive-Friendly." I repent that I ever stood in the pulpit and publically endorsed this man.*

*I say again: Rev. Slayton, please read Rev. Frank Hughes' sermon: "The Preacher in his Pulpit" with the scripture text from Jonah 3. You are making a grave error proclaiming heresy from the pulpit and in the classroom, and will, someday, be held accountable for this grievous sin of leading men and women, young people, and boys and girls, astray.*

*A low view of God leads to a low theology, and an endorsement of low worship. If this church continues to win the world, by being like the world, then the world will win this church. Worldliness is what makes sin look normal in any age and righteousness seems odd.*

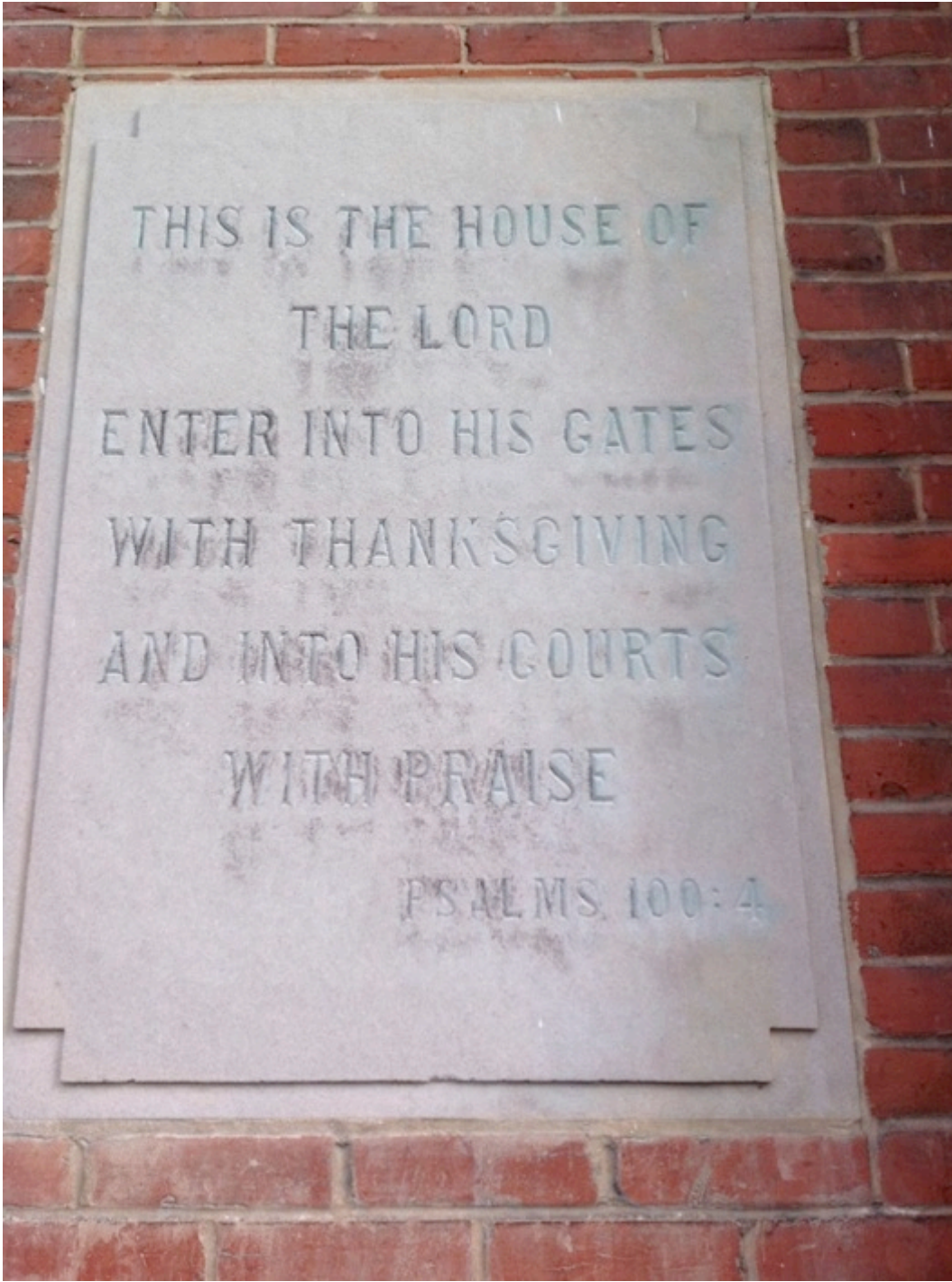


*I believe that one reason why the South Norfolk Baptist Church, at this present moment, has so little influence over the world that is South Norfolk, because the world has so much influence over the South Norfolk Baptist Church.*

*Some critic may say, "Well, it's not your Dad's church of a by-gone era. Things have changed." To which I say, "At the present time, it's not even the Lord's Church!"*

*Sin is to blame. Sin has been allowed into the church: through the teaching of heresy and the endorsement of secular and worldly music, dancing, and recreation.*

*-Rev. Joe Hughes,  
Retired Southern Baptist Pastor, and U.S. Army Chaplain*



**The engraved stone plaque, pictured above, appears at the right side of the main entrance to the church. It says, "This is the House of the Lord." *It does not say this is a house of entertainment or a theater.***

The verse, Psalm 100:4, (which is the first part of that verse on the tablet), when translated correctly, and seen in context of the entire Psalm, is intended for

the Christian to enter, and "come with solemnity." This verse does not imply that God is pleased with any type of worship, praise, or music. (It is so unfortunate that some at the church are trying to imply that this verse approves of their current use of heretical, charismatic worship style, and contemporary music that do not honor the Lord.)

It is a misinterpretation to use this verse out-of-context, to indicate that God approves of cheap and tawdry entertaining praise and music, in which worship becomes a performance. It reminds me of the truism quoted by my Grandfather, Rev. J. Leighton Read: "A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text." That means that to quote out of context is to remove a verse from its surrounding Scripture, in such a way as to distort it's meaning. The context in which a passage occurs always contributes to its meaning, and the shorter the passage the larger the contribution. For this reason, the quoter must always be careful to quote enough of the context and not misrepresent the meaning of the quote.

Psalm 100:4, when taken in the full context of Psalms 100-106, it becomes clear that these Psalms praise the sovereign God. Worshippers are encouraged to come before God with joy and thanksgiving (100:4). They are told to put aside their sins (101:1-5), for the Lord rejects deceitful worshippers (101:6-8). When they repent, the faithful can enjoy God's unchanging grace (Psalm 102), pardon (103:3), healing (103:3), acceptance (103:6-14) and sovereignty (103:19). (Source: "Old Testament Survey," by Paul R. House, Eric Mitchell).

Ecclesiastes 5:1: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil."

**Suggested Books for further study:**

"Worship in the Melting Pot" by Dr. Peter Masters. London: The Wakeman Trust, 2002.

"Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement" by Dan Lucarini. Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press Books, 2010.

"It's Not About the Music" by Dan Lucarini. Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press Books, 2010.

"Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns" by T. David Gordon. NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010.

"Why Johnny Can't Preach" by T. David Gordon. NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009.

"Stones for Bread" by A. Daniel Frankforter. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

"This Little Church Went to Market" by Gary E. Gilley. Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press Books, 2010.

"This Little Church Stayed Home" by Gary E. Gilley. Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press Books, 2010.

"This Little Church Had None" by Gary E. Gilley. Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press Books, 2009

*"The church has swallowed the monstrous heresy that noise (music), size, bluster and activity, make a man dearer to God." -A. W. Tozer*

*"When you take great theology and wed it to grand musicology, it ascends before God in magnificent doxology." -Stephen Olford*