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EDITORIAL

THE ONLY BIBLE SOME PEOPLE WILL EVER READ

His name was Bill. He wore a t-shirt with holes in it, ratty blue jeans, and never wore shoes; this had been his wardrobe for his entire four years of college. He was esoteric and very, very bright, and had recently become a Christian while attending college.

Across the street from his campus was a well-dressed, very conservative church. One day, Bill decided he wanted to attend a church service and walked in the front doors of the church. The service had already started, and Bill made quite a spectacle as he walked down the aisle, looking for a seat.

Unfortunately, the church was completely packed on this particular day, and he couldn't find a place to sit. By now, people were looking a bit uncomfortable by his presence, but no one said anything. Bill walked closer and closer to the pulpit and when he realized there was no place to sit, he squatted down and sat right on the carpet at the front of the church. (Although this might be perfectly acceptable behavior at a college fellowship, this kind of thing had never happened in this church before.)

The tension in the air was thick. Then, from way at the back of the church, an elder slowly began making his way toward Bill. This particular elder was in his eighties, had silver-gray hair, and always wore a three-piece suit. While known to be a godly man, he was also very elegant and very dignified. He walked with a cane and, as he walked toward Bill, everyone whispered among themselves, "You can't blame him for what he's going to do. How could you expect a man of his age and background to understand a college kid sitting on the floor?"

It took a long time for the man to reach the boy. The church was utterly silent except for the clicking of the man's cane. All eyes focused on him. The minister couldn't even begin preaching until the elder finished what he set out to do. Suddenly, the church saw the elderly man drop his cane on the

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floor. With great difficulty, he lowered himself and sat down next to Bill; he was not satisfied that Bill might worship alone.

The congregation was overcome with emotion. When the minister gained control of himself, he said, “What I’m about to preach, you will never remember. What you have just seen, you will never forget. Be careful how you live; you may be the only Bible some people will ever read” (“An Unspoken Bible,” n.d.).

While this story is well-known, my heart beats faster every time I read it. Such inspiring moments are impossible to plan ahead of time and difficult to put into words, yet they make a lasting impact. It seems that to know and follow God by heart is what sets the foundation for such inspiring moments. It is deep faith in God that moves leadership to a whole new level. As Solomon wrote, “A good leader motivates, doesn’t mislead, doesn’t exploit” (Prov. 16:10, MSG). More than that, God-filled leaders are “like spring rain and sunshine” (Prov. 16:15, MSG). How can we as leaders be like the good trees that bear good fruit (Matt. 7:17)?

In this issue of JACL, the underlying theme of our articles is based on the added value of Christian leadership. Andrew Cavins, a doctoral student of Strategic Leadership/Strategic Foresight at Regent University, begins his biblical reflection by asking the question, “What is ‘good?’” He seeks to answer this question through the periscope of 1 Timothy 6. Cavins maintains that “developing deeply rooted Christian character from habitually practicing these principles is the surest way to program oneself to meet the ethical challenges for Christian leadership today.”

In this issue, our Leadership Interview is conducted with a cohort of Christian leaders in Africa; this group was interviewed about different aspects of leadership in their particular countries, including differences between religious and political leaders, downfalls and ethical issues of Christian leaders in Africa, and the joys and challenges of Christian leadership in this context. This interview concludes with encouraging stories of how God is working among Christians in Africa.

Ron Rojas leads us into the feature articles section with his discourse entitled “Validating Leadership Styles Along a Life Cycle Framework of Faith-based Organizations.” He examines a method used to conceptualize growth stages, serving as a basis for deciding an optimal fit of leadership styles. From his research, Rojas creates a life cycle model with seven stages of growth and discusses practical implications for pastors as faith-based leaders.

Next, Josephine Ganu from the Adventist University of Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, discusses the impact that moral courage has on ethical leadership. Ganu shares the findings of her research, examining typical ethical situations

encountered by organizational members in the workplace, as well as the extent to which employees can exercise courage and the factors that impede their moral actions. The findings of this study may surprise you.

In the third feature article, entitled “Shared Leadership: A Rediscovery of an Old Paradigm and its Historical Context,” Marlon Robinson examines the many facets of shared leadership. He also highlights its benefits, such as increased trust among team members and performance improvement.

Steve Firestone, a retired U.S. Navy officer, naval aviator, and educator, examines the lives of the two great American leaders, Douglas MacArthur and Dwight D. Eisenhower, analyzing the role faith played in all they did. His article aims to provide lessons and insights which can be applied to leadership today.

Three professors from Wayland Baptist University, Janet Jones, Samantha Murray, and Kelly Warren, contribute to the Dialogue section, challenging Christian leaders to consider how they can positively influence corporate environments by bringing their Christianity into the workplace. This contribution outlines important attributes of Christian leadership which include being Christ-led and of excellent character, as well as being a servant leader.

As always, this issue concludes with book reviews and dissertation notices on the latest findings on the added value of Christian leadership; we hope you may find them to be helpful leadership resources.

Our desire is that this issue of the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* will provide input on how you as a Christian leader can be an instrument of memorable, inspiring moments in the lives of other people, as well as focusing on how to be a God-filled influencer. As you read through these articles, reflect on them with this question in mind: “If I were to be the only Bible a person ever read, what message would I leave with them?”

References

Inspirational Christian Connection (n.d.). An unspoken Bible. Retrieved from <http://gatewaytojesus.com/inspirationalstoriespage2.html>