

The Power of the Written Word

Ronald L. Dart's broadcast notes

Searching the Internet a while back, I came across an old item posted by Ravi Zecharias. He said something about the Tower of Babel that I did not quite understand: "In the biblical narrative, when the tower of Babel was being built, we are told that God sent a confusion of languages to stem the tide toward humanity's self-deification. The implication was that the uniformity of language would inexorably lead to a homogenization of tastes, and a celebration of evil. The human heart, being what it is, moves in a herd instinct, irresistibly drawn to the intrigue and allurements of perversions. The confusion of language was one fence that God put up to limit communication and prevent a moral landslide."

What a remarkable idea: Limit communication to prevent a moral landslide. Speaking from where we stand, on the brink of a moral landslide, it is hard to see how that would help.

Maybe if we took a look at the story itself, we can understand. Not long after Noah's flood, "the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there"

(Genesis 11:1-2). This would have been the land called Mesopotamia. You know it better as Iraq.

"And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:3-4). In the first place, that scattering abroad may have been exactly what God had in mind. In the second place, this does sound a lot like self glorification.

"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded" (Genesis 11:5). Now, this may be what scholars call anthropomorphism, a figure of speech in which God is presented in human form. On the other hand, the language is similar to

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what we will later find when Sodom is destroyed. For a judgment to be made, it is necessary for the judge to be present, and so God came down to see what was going on.

"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from

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Tax-Favored Gifts . . .

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Can Your Congregation be a Mega-Church?

By Allie Dart and Paula Hughes

Why not? Do we think too small? Do we lack a plan? Do we lack the vision? Could we be just a little bit lazy and take the easy way out? Or are we doing things wrong that can easily be changed?

It's likely we think too small, lack a plan, and don't envision our church or fellowship group being much larger than it is. But, let's discuss some things you may be able to improve that could stimulate growth in your congregation and excite the greatest pessimist among your group.

One of the best places to start is to ask: What would motivate a person, a family, a single mom with a child, or a teen to make every effort never to miss a Sabbath service? Let's start with the very first time a new person comes to worship with you. What do you think that person is hoping to find? Do you think that person is hoping to find all the right doctrines? No doubt about it, what a church teaches is important. Do you think this person is looking for perfect people? Then I doubt that they have found the right place. So what do new people hope to find when they decide to visit your church one Sabbath to see if they would like to make it their church home?

It might be interesting to survey members of a large or mega-church to learn why they joined this particular church and why they put down roots and remain with it—the reasons why people join, support, and continue in regular attendance and service in that church.

Sometimes it hurts to take a close look at our foibles. Self-examination pinches. It's often easier

to remain in self-denial and even focus on the wrong problem, concluding that our doctrines require too much of a person. But before we do that, take a look at what Rick Warren's Saddleback Church requires of people before they can be a full-fledged member.

Let's give some attention to something I learned from a dentist when I asked him what he felt contributed to the phenomenal growth experienced by the church he attended. This church was less than 15 years old, had thousands of members, and was still growing. He explained what drew him was warmth, friendliness, and caring members. He and his family instantly felt welcome and were integrated into its fellowship and programs. People got to know his family. It seemed as if every member was interested in them. If his family hurt, people were there to encourage and help.

Now take a moment to assess what happened with the last new person or family who attended your church. Did they look comfortable with your group? Did they linger after the service? Better yet, did they return the next week, and continue to return and become members? If not, was it because they did not find what the dentist and his family found? Let's take a look at how to show simple hospitality and move visitors into becoming one of your group.

- Greet every new person warmly with a smile on your face.
- Introduce yourself and be sure to get everyone's name, should it be a family or group. Write down names on a card in your pocket

there for this purpose. Repeat names in the conversation to help you remember them.

- Ask how they learned about your church or fellowship group. Good listeners are hard to come by and much appreciated. Ask relevant questions without being intrusive. Ask such questions as: where they work and live; do they have children; if so, how many.
- If they have children, get names and tell them about the YEA Sabbath School program. Give them age-appropriate YEA books and tell them when and where classes will be. Introduce them to their YEA teachers to show them the classroom. Introduce them to as many kids as possible to create a bonding situation.
- Explain when Bible studies are held and how much you'd like to see them attend each week.
- If you have fellowship refreshment time after service, invite them to join you.
- Be sure new people have adequate songbooks and help them find a comfortable seat.
- Many larger congregations use name tags for every member. Visitors get special name tags already prepared that include a welcome message. If your congregation is large enough, you can consider starting a name tag program as part of your effort to welcome new members.
- Introduce this new person or family to as many people as you can. Give backgrounds about each so they can make conversation.

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thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:6-9).

The Hebrew word, *babel*, means confusion. It is derived from an Acadian word which means, “Gate of the Gods.” This type of a play on words is common in the Bible, and in this case, it is suggestive of what they were aiming at. The idea, “Let us build a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven,” may actually have referred to a gate of the gods.

Scattering people and confounding their language is a really useful technique. It might serve well in some locations in the present world. The objective was clearly to disempower man. How? Why?

Centralization increases power, and power corrupts. Decentralization tends to diminish power. In this event, it seems to have been successful. I am not sure, though, what it had to do with preventing a moral landslide.

Nevertheless, watching an impending moral collapse on television, one is led to wonder what’s going on—what is the proximate cause of all this. When you come to an issue like this from a biblical worldview, you find precisely where the responsibility can be laid. When this social pattern was repeated before the fall of the Kingdom of Judah, the prophet Jeremiah laid the blame right where it belonged. “Woe be unto the

pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:1).

I will tell you that this chapter has made me shudder from time to time. These are shepherds of his people whom God is talking about, and that is a term reserved for the priests, the prophets, the teachers of the Law. So I wouldn’t look to the secular progressives as the cause of the problem. Rather they are the symptoms of the moral disease. God accused the prophets of Jeremiah’s time of scattering his flock, driving them away, and not visiting them.

“Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:9-11). In Hebrew usage, the prophet is the preacher and the priest is the judiciary—in our society, that may include Congress. There is no question that the blame for this deplorable collapse of morals is laid at the feet of the preachers and the civil leaders.

But how on earth can that be? When people speak for God, how can they be blamed for a moral collapse? Ravi Zacharias, in that same piece, made an important point: The written word is the way God has chosen to reveal himself. I

take that to mean that if you don’t stand on the Bible, the Word, you are in danger of idolatry—the use of images, which are of little value in reasoning, instead of words. The results of the gradual abandonment of the Word, even in religious contexts, is what follows in Jeremiah’s prophecy.

“Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:12). Now wait. Whose way is so slippery they can no longer stand? The preachers and the civil leaders. The preachers are mentioned first because they are more to blame. When you think about it, this makes sense, even today. It is the preachers and teachers in church who have the obligation to preach righteousness to the people who will later go on to lead the country.

What is the result for the preachers themselves? Their ways are slippery ways in the darkness—they have lost any foundation for right from wrong. They try to preach from their own sick hearts and minds—the result is cognitive dissonance to the level of insanity.

So what are you supposed to do? Find out the bottom line from this *Born to Win* broadcast that probes the source of today’s moral collapse and confusion. Discover the great failures of Christian Scholarship in these last days and what it is doing to people. This vital message, *The Power of the Written Word*, is yours completely FREE. Just check the box on the enclosed card and return it.

Fun at the Feast

by Paula Hughes

Have you taken a good look at the activities planned for this year's Feast celebration? There are so many opportunities to mix, mingle, and have fun—truly something for everyone!

The fun starts right away with Teen Fellowship Thursday night. Refreshments, food, and fun for all teens!

Lunch at the Family Picnic Friday afternoon will be provided by CEM, cooked and served by folks from the Independent Church of God, Atlanta. Hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, coleslaw, chips, and all the fixin's are always a big hit. Come early—don't miss the food or fun!

Friday evening, come out for the Sing Along. Brent Kern and Skip Martin have come up with an enjoyable way to learn some contemporary worship music. If you're already "into it," this is your chance to sing along with your favorites!

The next evening, CEM will treat all comers to pie and ice cream, served by the Kansas City Sabbath Church. This is another hugely popular event, a perennial favorite! Because it's an indoor affair, you know that the weather will cooperate! The more, the merrier, so be sure not to miss it.

Sunday is packed full of things to do. Seniors and friends can enjoy the Senior Luncheon at the Olive Garden, followed by a dance. Get your dancin' shoes ready, because that evening is the Family Dance and the Young at Heart Dance. Refresh-

ments will be served, so you can dance 'til you drop!

Monday afternoon, all Fun Show participants will get together to practice. Whatever your talent, be part of this event sponsored by the Seventh Day Christian Assembly. The Fun Show will be presented that night, and everyone is invited to come enjoy beautiful music, skits, dancing, and many laughs. When brethren share their talents, it's always lots of fun!

Tuesday, things really get serious, as teams mix it up for the Golf Scramble. If you don't play, come out to Indian Bayou and pick a team to cheer to victory! If you have a child or teen participating in Youth Day practice, you may be late getting to the course, because practice begins at the same time as the Golf Scramble. You will still have plenty of time to enjoy the fun—because Skip Martin and the Youth Day Coordinator will keep a tight rein on practice time!

The Feast activities close on Thursday with a Dutch-treat Farewell Luncheon. Stick around to say your final good-byes and make plans to meet next year.

Whew! That's a lot to do! Everyone can pick and choose, and attend those activities that especially appeal to you. Don't forget to schedule time to spend in private with God, who makes the Feast possible through all those who volunteer, and gives it to us as a gift to celebrate.

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- This is a cardinal rule: Never leave a new person or family alone. Make sure someone is always talking with them except during the worship service. Remember, they haven't gained their comfort level and may feel awkward. Leaving them alone could leave them feeling your church is cold and uncaring.
- Send the new person a card the very next day and be sure some member visits them that week if at all possible. If not, phone them.

The most important thing to remember is to open your heart, and let the newcomer(s) feel how glad you are that they have come. Genuine love, warmth, and sincerity on your part will go a long way toward making someone new feel welcome. And if they feel welcome, they are much more likely to return and become a fellow Christian serving in your group.

Could your church become a mega church? Remember, 3,000 people were baptized on the day of Pentecost. Are you thinking too small?

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*That the man of God may be proficient
and equipped for every good work.*