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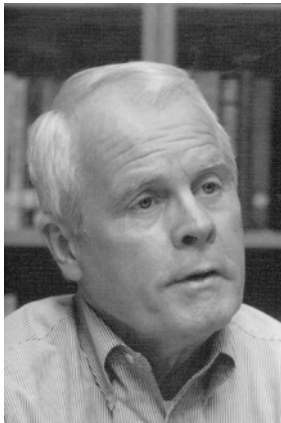
Great Commandment Passion, Great Commission Focus

September 2007

Gordon MacDonald Workshop

October 24, 2007, 9 AM to 3 PM

Parkview Community Church, Glen Ellyn, Illinois



Don't miss this opportunity for questions and answers with Gordon MacDonald on the topic of "Resilient Leadership."

Who is invited? Pastors, leadership staff, students preparing for leadership and anyone interested in discussing and learning more about this topic.

Registration is \$39 either [online](#) or mailed to the NCCBA office: PO Box 568, Whitehall WI 54773.

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Valuable Information for Your Church Growth

Demographic information about your church location is available as a free service. All NCCBA churches are listed. Call Don at 715-538-2298 if you have questions.
www.Link2Lead.com

Ministry Quick Links

[CBAmerica](#)
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Now available from the NCCBA office. The new Microsoft Office Pro Plus 2007 is \$122 plus \$35 for the installation media.

Natural Church Development

This is a proven tool that can help your church with growth, not just in terms of quality but in terms of evangelism. No one tool can bring total success, but this one can be of great value.

NCCB will help you identify the eight qualities and six growth factors for a healthy church. **By healthy NCD, this means one that is seeing a steady growth through conversions and the ongoing discipleship of those who are part of the church.**

We are able to now offer this tool through the Regional office. If you are not familiar with NCD, contact us. Or if you have used it in the past but were somewhat frustrated, please **give us a call at 715-538-2298**. Significant improvements have been made in how to interpret and implement findings.

Adobe, Norton, and hardware are also available. Call Jean at the office, 715-538-2298, for price quotes and to order.

NCCBA

www.nccba-gc2.com

WEBSITE

THE FINISH

The last day, heading out, was the toughest. Another pastor and I had been on a canoe trip into the Algonquin wilderness with a group of nine men from our church. Five days earlier we had packed our gear and our food into six canoes and launched our adventure.

We put in at Rain Lake, a narrow stretch of water almost 4 miles long. We only had two portages - trails connecting two bodies of water over which we carry everything: backpacks, canoes, and other assorted camp gear. The second day we would have seven portages. It was brutal.

But the trip out, back across Rain Lake, was wearying. We knew we were almost done. We wanted to hit the showers to wash off five days of bugs, perspiration, fish and dirt. We wanted to eat real food again.

On most of the other lakes we could see where we were going. Rain Lake was narrow enough to hide the destination. Every bend and cove seemed to promise the beach marking the journey's end. And every time we had to keep on paddling.

On all our other lakes we kept the canoes pretty close together. We could talk to each other. On Rain Lake, so close to the trailhead, we spread out, each pair of guys making the best time they could in the headwind that punctuated our last day out.

It was the only time on the trip when I seriously wanted to quit. But we weren't back yet. We had to keep up our rhythmic strokes pushing the canoes across the water.

That long last day became a metaphor to me of what it might mean to finish well. I've been in full time ministry for thirty-two years. My wife, Jeannette, and I have raised and launched two boys who are both married and doing well. We're grandparents. Social Security tells me that in five years, I can retire with full benefits.

I can't imagine what retirement will be like. I had a taste during a mini-sabbatical two years ago and it was good. Some days I'm weary, tired of the pace. Even though I try to stay in decent shape, my body doesn't have the physical stamina it once had. It takes more effort to do just about everything. I understand something of what Paul called the burden of caring for God's people. Some of the

hard knocks along the way have taken their toll. And many close friends with whom I have been privileged to share ministry partnerships are scattered in God's Kingdom work. We never get to visit as much as we'd like.

It's like being in that canoe, not able to see clearly the journey's end, somewhat isolated, tired from the trip, keeping up the pace now out of determination as much as desire. [And yet the desire still burns - that passion God ignited when he called an insecure, impulsive college sophomore to himself more than four decades ago.]

So what does it mean for me to finish well?

Paul, writing from house arrest in Rome with many years of service under his belt, said this: "*I press on* to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, *I press on* toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained" (Phil. 3:12b-16).

The last leg of the journey is a lousy time to quit. Stop paddling and you resign yourself to the wilderness. There's nothing to sustain life in the wilderness. The word that came to me in the back of that canoe was faithfulness. An old word my family used was stick-to-it-tive-ness. Paul said, "I press on" Stick!

Detroit Lions defensive coordinator Joe Barry hammers home to his players one simple message: "Play hard; play fast; be prepared, and finish." It's a welcome emphasis to die-hard Lions fans. We know too well our team's capacity to snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory in the fourth quarter. We have come to expect the meltdown. It doesn't matter how spectacular they play in the first three quarters of the game if they don't put it away in the fourth. Our beloved Lions need to get it: "*Finish!*"

And so do I. I can't finish well if I don't finish at all. It matters what I have done thus far, and it matters that I finish, faithful all the way to the end of my ministry journey.

Leo Cumings, Bethel Baptist Church, Jackson, Michigan

Pastor Care: "What Should I Do?"

When people I care about are going through difficult times, what should I do? This question has come up several times in recent times. I have been thinking about it and I hesitate to write about it, since I don't have a lot of specific answers. However, as pastors, I

think we need to carefully sort out some general guidelines for ourselves and to communicate to our congregations.

The first time this question hit me was when a good friend and colleague e-mailed me concerning several very serious situations affecting him and his family. I wondered what to do, and not being sure of the answer, I did what many people do in similar circumstances-nothing! Lots of options came to my mind: call, write, go see him, e-mail back. Each option was met with all kinds of objections and what-ifs that raced through my thinking. I did nothing to respond, and by making that choice I did something that was perhaps the worst of the options available to me-I left him alone.

The second time this question came to me was yesterday, when my wife shared a vignette from the adult women's Sunday School class she attended. A woman who has been widowed for many years told about how she was treated after the death of her husband and how painful it was for her. Neighbors would drive by and look away, never waving or stopping to say hello. Friends would ignore her or speak only briefly. When the question was posed, "What would have been helpful?", the conversation shifted to another direction. I wonder if, having been "left alone" many years ago, this lady was "left alone" again.

I am sure that every one of us can call to mind times in our own lives and ministries when this question came up. There are a couple of things that I am sure of in the midst of my uncertainties. Perhaps the most fundamental one is that just leaving people alone is not a good choice.

I remember a time when we lived in Germany and a young German Lutheran Pastor died unexpectedly. His wife was involved in a German/American Women of the Chapel group. My wife and I didn't know what to do. We didn't know German customs around death and grief, but we felt a desire to do something. Finally my wife decided to do what she would usually do. So she prepared some food, called the woman and made arrangements to visit her. She took the food and gave it as an expression of her/our care and concern. The woman's response was amazing. She said that this was not the usual custom in Germany, and that she understood the purpose and desire it expressed and that she was grateful. Because of the changes brought to her life by her husband's death, our contact with her ceased. At the very least, she knew that a couple of American believers cared for her in her loss.

A second thing that I am very sure of is that we never, never, never, should tell someone, "I know how you feel." Cut out your tongue first! If this offends you, I am sad that I have offended you. However I am absolutely convinced this is so. "I want to understand how you feel." "Please tell what is going on for you." "I can hardly imagine what it is like for you." If you have had a similar experience, you may want to say something like, "I remember what it was like for me, and I would like to hear how you are doing."

The "I know" statement usually is a well-intentioned attempt to let the person know that we are aware of their suffering. However, when we tell them we know what it is like for them, we subtly indicate that we don't need to hear it from them. We also subtly diminish or dismiss the significance of their feelings. I remember telling an aunt of mine that I knew how she felt after the death of her husband. Her response was surprising. She basically told me I was wrong, but she told in a kind way. Her husband had been an invalid for years, suffering greatly and changing profoundly. He had been a large, powerful merchant seaman and was a mere shadow of his former stature, unable to care for himself. My aunt gently informed that she had already done all of her grieving and now was more relieved and joyful than hurting.

The third thing I am sure of is that admitting that we don't know what to do or say to be of help is much better than doing nothing or doing something we are unsure about. Sometimes, saying that and nothing more is the very best thing, because it gives the other person a wide-open door to let us know what they would like or appreciate. And if they don't respond with information, maybe that means they don't know either, and the best thing is to just be there with them and wait.

My final recommendation is to keep coming back. Right after some loss occurs, everyone is around. A week later, only a few are still involved. A month later, almost no one is still involved. Six months later, there very likely is no one still involved in communicating care and concern, giving a listening ear or a helping hand. Certainly it takes time and effort, and it may be among the most welcomed of all the things that we can do.

Let me conclude where I started. When the question comes up, "What should I do?" do something to let the person know that they are not alone and that you do not intend to leave them alone. In the midst of all the up-side-down events of the crucifixion, resurrection

and ascension, it is no accident that Jesus said, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Yours in Christ's love,
Nicholas D. Bell, LMFT

Interim Pastor, First Baptist Church, Streator IL

A GRATEFUL LIFE

As I reflect on my life, I am amazed that as a teenager who came from Bagdad, Iraq, alone to the U.S. forty-one years ago that God has blessed me beyond all that I could have imagined or thought. I was 16 years old with \$300 in my name and not even a plane ticket to go home on if I had to. My vocabulary was "yes" and "no" only, and I learned the word "OK" in the New York airport.

The 23rd Psalm is full of rich affirmation of God for us; it is too bad it's wasted on funerals only. My experience has been that the more people grow in the Lord, the more for granted they take God. For example, one person sees rain as a blessing while another sees it as a nuisance because their hearts tell their eyes how to interpret what they see. To the grateful heart everything is a gift from God. G.K. Chesterton puts it this way "Children are delighted when Santa puts toys or sweets into their stockings. Shall I not be grateful when he puts in my stocking the Gift of two healthy Legs?"

As I have been privileged to speak to many pastors, youth pastors, and elders, I find them to be the least grateful in their lives. Maybe they feel that God owes them better. The prophet Elisha in II Kings 4:1-7: A poor widow comes to the prophet and laments that her husband's death left the family deeply in debt and the creditor is coming to take her sons as slaves. She has no food in the house save a small jar of oil. Elisha tells her to borrow as many jars as she can, and pour oil into them. Supernaturally the oil will keep flowing until every jar is filled. She will then be able to sell the oil and settle her debts. As predicted, the oil keeps flowing until her sons tell her "there are no more vessels," at which point it stops. My point is our ability to enjoy God's blessings is more a function of our capacity to receive them than of any limitation on God's ability to bless us. In other words, the more blessing we are capable of finding around us the more God will be blessing us. I have come to recognize it is He who blesses, and I spend time with a heart of gratuity to find empty jars to enlarge my capacity.

I am so far ahead of the \$300 that I started with, also a great wife, sons and daughters- in-laws, 5 grandchildren and a great ministry. My disciples are serving around the world all for the glory of God. MY CUP RUNNETH OVER! Is yours?

P.S. I promise next time I write I will encourage you OK? OK.

Bill Badal

Associate Pastor, First Baptist Church, Sycamore, Illinois

CHAPLAINCY UPDATE

In the gospel of Luke we read, He replied, "What is impossible from a human perspective is possible with God" (18:27). We have seen the Lord do some impossible things in the lives of our chaplains. Warren Haggrays' wife Sandra had a double lung transplant on Father's day and has recovered in a miraculous fashion. Ninety days later she is walking around the block and is off many of her medications and doing things she was not able to do for years - like laugh hilariously at something funny.

We have Chaplain Thomas Grove serving in Columbia, SC as a chaplain in a VA Medical Center. He is in his eighties and is too young to retire. Ricky Vanhooser and his wife both retired from the Air Force. Ricky has been on the faculty of the Baptist Bible College and Seminary in Springfield, MO for the last eight years and was just picked up by the Navy for active duty as a Navy chaplain (this just doesn't

happen with non-Catholic or non-Jewish applicants but it has with CBAmerica) Praise God for the way He is at work.

Vincent Hokkanen will be sworn into the Minnesota National Guard September 19th. Shane and Janet Vande Vrede of Rockford, MI begin their active duty ministry with the Army at Fort Sill, OK September 17th. We now have two CBA chaplains at Fort Sill both named Shane. Barry Green of Brooklyn, NY and Luke Phillips of West Virginia were selected into the Chaplain Candidate program with the Army, Andy Bunn of Mt. Joy, PA was recently picked up for the Army Reserves, James Lightle of California was approved for Law enforcement chaplaincy and Joe Gomez of Hollywood, FL was selected for chaplaincy in specialized ministry.

This has been a great summer as we have seen the Lord bring new candidates to chaplaincy. We are processing the paperwork of another group of potential chaplains now. Pray for our men in Iraq; Mark Mitera, Ted Highhouse, Darin Dunham and Ivan Arreguin.

Those going now go for 15 months - a long time to be away from families. Pray for their safety and for their families back home. For more information about Chaplaincy or for a personal report in your church contact Al Russell at 218-776-2813.



After giving birth to a new church (Wanamingo), Faith Community of West Concord, MN, gives birth to a new building.

Pictured above are members of the Building Committee and Pastor David Brederland, August 12, 2007.

Upcoming Events

Prayer Summit, Cedar Lake, IN, September 24-27

Gordon MacDonald Seminar

Glen Ellyn, IL

October 24

[Register at our website](#)

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING LAWS for your state are now on our [website](#) under "Resources."

NCCBA Churches in Need of a Pastor

Please pray for the following churches and Search Committees:

- First Baptist Church--Elmhurst, IL ASSOCIATE PASTOR
- First Baptist Church--Pekin, IL WORSHIP PASTOR
- First Baptist Church--Lansing IL
- First Baptist Church--Sibley IA
- First Baptist Church--Parkers Prairie MN
- Palisade Baptist Church--Silver Bay MN

Thank you for your prayers! Walt Walkowski is the new Youth/Associate Pastor at Bethel Baptist Church in Jackson, Michigan.

Contact Our Office

North Central CBA - Jean Wright - 715-538-2298 - nccba@triwest.net

North Central Conservative Baptist Association | P.O. Box 568 | Whitehall | WI | 54773

