



North Central News

*North Central Missions Center
Serving the Churches of the
Etowah, Lanier and Roswell Baptist Associations*

May 2020

Leading During Uncertain Times

"Then they told David, saying, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floor." Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the Lord said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.""
1 Samuel 23:1-2

This month's Newsletter Article is addressing the enormous struggle and pressure of leading during the unknown and wildly opinionated coronavirus outbreak and reopening of America. If you have an opinion, it is not hard to find someone that supports it and at the same time someone else that claims it to be unfounded and detrimental. The battle lines of opposition to the various directives are not just casually marked, they are massive ramparts, in bright red, that have taken up positions willing to shoot first and ask questions later. Some close friends are not so close anymore simply because they are looking at this from two different perspectives and there really isn't much middle ground. If you want to reopen, you hate grandma, if you want to remain shut-down, you hate the country.

In the midst of this national catastrophe the church is not even considered a legitimate player by the cultural elites (they call us "non-essential," if you haven't heard). This is extremely sad considering the church has the **ONLY** answer to how our nation should function and proceed in any of life's uncertain times, coronavirus notwithstanding. Left on the sidelines, or even outright ignored, is a horrible position to be in, and in some way, we may have made ourselves "non-essential" by drifting so far from the basic aspects of biblical standards that make us "**salt**" and "**light**." Why would the world listen to us when we look just like them, yet claim to be 'different?'

Before we look at a biblical application to this scenario, let us remember the facts at hand. This is a virus. This is not an uncommon occurrence in our lifetime and beyond. Historically some epidemics have had devastating fatality numbers while others not so much. Considering the worst-case scenario, the fatality rate of this virus does not reach the level of seriousness that has been given to it by the disease specialists and the state governors in most states. Yes, it is a killer, but SARS back in 2009 was a much more dangerous illness and it attacked adults and children alike. This one has targeted our very senior and severely health-compromised citizenry, a much smaller demographic for sure. This is not to say that we should not take it seriously, but shutting down the economic engine, closing almost all businesses, and closing all schools and churches is not the most balanced approach to a foreign virus. Are we going to do this every flu season from now on? We don't know the impact of every germ and how widespread and dangerous it is until it has manifested itself. By now you can see the original numbers were not even close. Not by a long shot. This is not to dismiss the reality of this disease, but rather trying to put it into perspective.

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CHRISTMAS BACKPACKS

FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

The Christmas Backpack ministry has been restructured with many changes. Details have not been posted on the Georgia Baptist Mission Board website as of the writing of this Newsletter.

Hopefully, we will be able to provide more detailed information in the June issue of North Central News.

In the event you want details sooner, you may contact Patty Ficarra (backpacks@gabaptist.org) or Dan Dockery (cba1883@bellsouth.net).

Dan Dockery is the point of contact for questions this year.

Or, you may call the North Central office (770-384-8548) and we will assist you in obtaining answers to your questions.

GO GEORGIA 2020

The Georgia Baptist Mission Board has posted the following information regarding GO GEORGIA 2020:

GO GEORGIA 2020 will be a hybrid event that will be delivered online. GBMB is encouraging associations and churches to host face-to-face events using pre-recorded videos.

Additional and more detailed information will become available in the near future. North Central Missions Center will provide information to our churches as updates become available.

“The goal prior to the pandemic was to have 1300+ people at FBC Snellville in August. With this new model, we expect to double, if not triple, the number of people engaged at GO GEORGIA this year. This approach will provide a database of high level training that churches can access in August AND throughout the year.”

(Quote from GBMB email)

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For those that have lost a loved one from this invisible killer, it is little comfort that there have been less deaths than was predicted. You have been hit hard by the result of this awful experience. Watching someone you love experience overwhelming suffering because they simply can't get a breath is horrific. Words are inadequate to explain how difficult it is to watch someone suffer and then lose the battle. I can relate. However, life comes with an abundance of risks and no guarantees. At least that is what our nation used to believe, and it is a mature approach when you wake up every morning to tackle what is being thrust at you. I am only one voice, only one opinion, but I would like to overlay a biblical story of uncertainty and risk and how it was handled upon this current environment.

Three Characteristics of Godly Leaders

The reference at the top of this article describes an amazing story that I would like to apply to our present situation. David was on the lam from King Saul. Saul was 'dead set' on killing David no matter what it cost. David had gathered quite a following of men and they were having to take refuge in some of the most off-the-grid locations in order to stay out of the prying eyes of Saul's spies. One of the cities located between the capital of Judah (Hebron) and the capital of Israel (Gilgal), just slightly closer to the Southern Kingdom, was called Keilah, just a small hamlet. However, this town was strategically positioned on a hill and was a walled city, practically impregnable, with only one way in and one way out. David heard that the Philistines were killing and robbing them on their threshing floor. You see, in a walled city you cannot process grains (wheat, barley, oats) without contaminants. You need the wind to blow away the chaff. The walls blocked the wind, so they would have to go outside the protection of the walls to thresh their grains. At that point, they were sitting ducks. There was no defense. David hears of this devious, and quite frankly cowardly, atrocity. What does David do? Verse 2 exclaims that, "**David inquired of the Lord.**"

The situation is not as cut and dry as you would expect. David and his men had been careful to avoid their own destruction by hiding, by staying put. David's decision to go to Keilah would be putting his men and himself in harms way by being out in the public and in Saul's territory for all to see, not to mention entering into a walled city, a much greater danger that David's faithful men fearfully brought to his attention (v. 3). What did David do? Well, verse 4 records that he repeated verse 2, stating, "**Then David inquired of the Lord once again.**" David sought advice **twice** before making a move but notice where he sought that advice. Even his close friends disagreed with him. The risk was too great, they thought. They encouraged him NOT TO GO, however, David sought God's advice and His direction. So, here is the **1st Characteristic** of godly leadership – **Seek the Lord, and Him only, for His direction**

The Lord had given clear instructions for David to save the people of Keilah, to provide protection and aid to his neighbors to the north in their time of desperation. David followed the Lord, not the seemingly wise counsel that was given him by others. The result? Verse 5 states boldly and clearly, "**So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.**" David had taken unbelievable risks to himself and to the faithful men that had sacrificed so much to serve and follow him. Leadership requires this type of decision-making during uncertain times.

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By staying put and not doing anything for his own countrymen in Keilah, he would have certainly been making the “safer” choice, for both himself and his men. A “few people” lost during the threshing floor incidents in Keilah were worth their own personal safety, right? Apparently not! So, here is the 2nd Characteristic of godly leadership – **Making decisions ALWAYS requires a level of risk**

The interesting conclusion to this particular story is that there was no gratitude by these “inhabitants of Keilah” for what David had done for them. David hears that Saul becomes aware of his location in the walled city of Keilah (v. 7-9), and so he asks the Lord just two questions: (1) “Will Saul come down as Your servant has heard?” and, (2) “Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hands?” (v. 10-12) The answer for both questions posited to the Lord was a resounding, “YES!” Can you imagine?! David just saved these people, a job that Saul and his army SHOULD have been doing. And now these same men were going to turn him over to this slack-jawed, worthless politician, King Saul! David has his men high tail it out of there and go in multiple directions to confuse and slow down Saul’s pursuit. It worked. So, here is the 3rd Characteristic of godly leadership – **Do not make decisions based on the reactions of those you serve**

Here we have the three characteristics demonstrated to us through one of God’s greatest leaders. Acts 13:36 states that “*David served his own generation by the will of God,*” a phrase we have been bantering about lately, asking each other, “What do you think is God’s will for us in all this?” I would recommend you take the example of David as you lead in this highly charged environment. We cannot forget the fact that there is historic precedent for the danger of simply “not acting” when our nation has entered periods of judgment. Our nation needs our example, our spiritual action, and our voice of reason now, even though they have written us off as uneducated, unsophisticated, and mentally imbalanced, not even wanting to hear from us. Our church body needs our unequivocal trust in a Holy God through this unique period of confusion and fear, for us to reveal that our unseen God is more powerful than this unseen germ. Our weaker church members are desperately needing for us to train them and equip them to be able to stand on their own feet and to feed themselves spiritually so they can break the chains of “spiritual dependence” and become leaders in their own right.

Applying these three characteristics to our current situation begs for us as leaders to **first** of all use this time that we’ve been given free from extra duties to **SEEK THE LORD**. This is a time to draw away, to have solitude with the Lord and hear from Him what He wants you to do, the direction He wants you to lead His people. Our decisions should be from time spent with the Lord, NOT FROM TIME LISTENING TO THE NEWS! As much as I admire and appreciate the work done by our President and our State Governor, my orders come from a higher source! I should follow the leadership of Almighty God. Period.

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Second, I must realize that being in the position of leadership requires that I lead. Risk is involved. My decision, regardless of which way I take my flock, must be in the direction I sense my Heavenly Father directing me. It may cause uneasiness and difficulty with those I lead. Which brings me to the **third** point, I must NOT make my decisions based on the approval and praise of those that I am called to serve. I must do the RIGHT THING, because it is always the right thing to do. Sometimes those closest to you do not see it. That's why God has placed you in that position.

Point to Ponder

The clear definition of the "church," a term never used in the Old Testament, is from the Greek word, "*ekklesia*," meaning "the gathered ones." Apparently, many of us have stated that we can gather online and it's pretty much the same thing, but is it? Five times we are commanded to "*greet one another with a holy kiss*," or a "*kiss of charity*," and this is from 2 different authors (Paul and Peter). "*Laying on of hands*" was a common practice also mentioned 5 times, the "*breaking of bread*" is practiced and encouraged, celebrating the "*Lord's Supper*" in order to *remember* Christ's sacrifice is commanded, and in each of these activities, the people of God HAVE TO BE "gathered together." The concept of "social distancing" is without question anathema to this clear biblical mandate. How are we to balance this in our current situation?

This is not a stand against our governing authorities. Romans 13:1-7 clearly dictates that we should be aware of how Almighty God is the one that puts governing leaders in authority. However when they ask us to violate a biblical directive, our resolve must be in the same voice of Peter in Acts 5:29, "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" Gathering together should be the goal of every church leader. Gathering together should be the desire of every true believer. The process and function of our coming together must have clear guidelines to honor our authorities and provide for our church body. Here are a few suggestions that I have witnessed in the last month as churches in our Associations have returned.

- Have more, abbreviated services (use a signup program online)
- Online services can also have seating available for those that are ready to attend a live service
- Use multiple rooms for a wider spaced seating arrangement
- Provide open doors for arrival and departure
- Attendants at the door of the restrooms to provide order and instruct sanitary practice
- Have offering plates placed in locations near the doors
- Stagger the dismissal time

The main thing is that the body of Christ needs to reevaluate what ARE the "essentials." The world calls us "non-essential," but they will NEVER get it. They would prefer that we just

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simply stop meeting altogether. However, this is an opportunity for us to step back and reassess the biblical mandates, the things that are necessary, the vital statistics of the church. Read the Book of Acts, assess the characteristics that were absolutely necessary. There may be some “non-essentials” in the church that have taken on greater emphasis (and price tags) that have been brought to light during this forced time of evaluation. What are the MAIN THINGS?! (Cursory look - deep study of the Word, prayer (I’m talking serious, fervent, purposeful prayer), fellowship, evangelism, breaking bread together)

In the weeks and months to come, there could possibly be a huge number of people that will have lost their jobs. Many businesses might not be able to rebound, and this is our time to provide the greatest example of our Lord Jesus’ love and compassion. We must prepare now to be arms and hands of our Precious Lord to the hurting and suffering around us. We are the Body of Christ, and we are essential only because He has chosen to work through us. Not for honors, fanfare, or recognition, but because as John says, “***we love Him because He first loved us.***” (1 John 4:19) Let us demonstrate that love to a sin sick world.

Alan J. Morris

PS Last note. I am happy to report that as of the writing of this Newsletter, the percent of Americans that have NOT died of the coronavirus is 99.986. I think we should advertise this number more than the number of deaths



"Is your church staff moving together as a team?"

***"Are you facing financial and budget challenges
as a ministry in these uncertain days?"***

**"Are you needing help navigating
the difficulties and challenges of ministry demands?"**



Dr. Gary Jarnagin retired from a 30 year career with American Airlines as a General Manager and Division Manager of H.R. He has also served in a number of church staff positions and most recently served at Truett McConnell University in Cleveland, Georgia as Director of Financial Development and Associate Professor in the Hubmaier School of Theology and Missions teaching Church Administration and Leadership.

Dr. Gary Jarnagin can serve your ministry in:

*** Staff Development * Budgeting (Development, Planning, and Priority)
* Discipleship * Leadership * Great Commission Focus.**

Dr. Emir Caner, President of Truett McConnell says of Gary Jarnagin:

"At the very time Truett McConnell was experiencing exponential growth, the Lord sent us Dr. Gary Jarnagin to lead in providing the wisdom and raising the resources for numerous projects, including the \$15 million Blaurock Center. Dr. Jarnagin blends the heart of a pastor with the wisdom of a Christian businessman and leader, an incredibly rare combination that has blessed the body of Christ immeasurably. Churches in need of wisdom for ministry and finances would do well in seeking the wisdom of this man that God has raised up with such unique talents."

Dr. Gary Jarnagin

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

May 2020

25 **Memorial Day Holiday** (North Central Missions Center office will be closed)

June 2020

17 **Roswell Baptist Association Executive Ministry Team Meeting**, 10:30 AM, Clear Springs Baptist Church
Roswell Baptist Association Pastor's Luncheon, immediately following Executive Meeting, Place TBD
 18 **Lanier Baptist Association Executive Ministry Team Meeting**, 10:30 AM, First Baptist Cumming
Lanier Baptist Association Pastor's Luncheon, immediately following Executive Meeting, Place TBD
 21 **Father's Day**
 23 **Etowah Baptist Association Executive Ministry Team Meeting**, 10:30 AM, North Central Missions office
Etowah Baptist Association Pastor's Luncheon, immediately following Executive Meeting, Place TBD

July 2020


4 **Independence Day**
 16 **Lanier Baptist Association Pastor's Luncheon**, 11AM, Place TBD
 28 **Etowah Baptist Association Pastor's Luncheon**, 11:30 AM, Place TBD

Happy Father's Day

A Father's
Compassion

PSALM 103:13





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