

Looking at the Unseen

Hebrews 11:17-31 As we continue our travels through the Book of Hebrews, underline or circle the phrases looking at or looking towards. Faith always looks at the eternal rather than the temporal. We can see the temporal, but we cannot usually see the eternal. In this chapter we see more stories from the Hall of Faith, and each story has one thing in common. These heroes of our faith were able to see the unseen by faith. We see the faith of Moses in the following passages: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (vv. 24-27, KJV).

Social Issues Still Count

☒ Last week was a milestone in modern American political history. The election results (New Jersey and Virginia gubernatorial races) and the battle over healthcare show that the nation’s interest in social issues has not waned. New coalitions are forming around the pivotal legislative concerns of our day. From my vantage point, I am noticing a passion among individual citizens to engage in the political process – whether the topic is the economy, healthcare or gay marriage. The average citizen not only wants to express their opinion, but also has become savvy in engaging the powers that be. The insight of these new activists is shown in their ability to

organize and get results. Over 20,000 people came to D.C. last week to voice their concerns about healthcare.

Of Picket Lines, Politics & People

✘ An e-mail from an old college friend got me thinking. She had reconnected with a high school classmate on FaceBook and her friend, a passionate, self-proclaimed gay rights advocate, was constantly posting statements and articles on the subject for all to see. My friend, knowing that I work with a ministry that helps those dealing with unwanted same-sex attraction, asked, “How, in your opinion, do you even begin to talk to someone like this? Obviously she doesn’t have the same worldview ... so what talking points would even register with her?”

My initial thought was, “Maybe none.” As I prayed about how to respond, God reminded me of two incidents that changed my own thinking and more importantly, my heart. Some years ago, I was working for a Christian ministry that was hosting a conference on biblical sexuality. Sounds somewhat innocuous, but as it turns out saying that people can find freedom from a life dominated by same-sex attraction through Jesus is rather controversial. The press heavily covered the event and so news of a protest from the gay community came as no surprise. The day of the conference arrived and so did a noisy group of around 200 young people carrying signs and chanting through a bullhorn, “Hey, hey, ho, ho, homophobia’s got to go” and “Two, four, six, eight, stop the lies and stop the hate.” As the day wore on and the chanting subsided, I pushed past my fear and walked up to a group of young people at the picket line. I had

no idea what I was going to say or do. My head was reeling with arguments and sound bites to defend biblical truth to these poor, misguided souls.

Looking every bit the straight-laced, non-denominational conservative that I was, I began to ask questions about their lives. "Do you go to college? What's your major? Where are you from? Do you like living here?" Though suspicious, they humored me and responded. Eventually, one 20-something student and I began to connect. I sensed a lost yet hungry look in his eyes as he told me about the classes he was taking and the goals he had for his life. We talked for quite awhile and I still wanted to know more, but the group leader yelled through the bullhorn that it was time to move on and he shuffled past me in compliance and reticence. I was truly sad to see him go. I've thought of him many times since then and wonder where he is now. For a moment, God allowed me to see this young man through His eyes. And in that moment, while my body was on one side of the picket line, my heart was most certainly on the other.

This past summer, I was at another conference, an annual event our ministry puts on to offer support to those whose lives have been impacted by the issue of homosexuality in some way. Nearly a thousand individuals from across the country and around the world came to Chicago to hear messages of hope and freedom, but more than a hundred came for another reason – to protest us for "preaching hate." It was an angry group as protests go. As I stood there, surveying the police perimeter and sizing up the situation, an unusually tall man, dressed as a transvestite with gaudy makeup, matted hair and statement-making clothes, caught my eye. He would have stood out anywhere, but amid the throng of protestors and abrasive signs, something more jumped out at me. It was the years of inner torment and woundedness that were etched on his face. It melted my heart and I began to cry for him and for this group of hurting men and women. I had to turn away so they could not

see my face. When the dust settled and they began to leave, I went out to talk to the police officers. One of the more vocal members of the group began to look for a trashcan. Sheepishly, she said to me, “I guess I shouldn’t just leave this here.” This was my moment to connect. I could have told her that she had it all wrong, that we didn’t believe in hate, that Jesus loved her, but instead, I held out my hand and said, “I’ll take it for you.” She looked at me with surprise, handed me her Starbucks cups and her “Hate is not a family value” sign and shuffled off.

Sometimes what you don’t say is more important than what you could. For the heart that is hurting, the best sound bites and the most articulate arguments may not help at all. While politics and social issues do matter, they matter only because people do. I pray often that God gives me eyes to see beyond the rhetoric to the condition of the hearts of those around me – whatever life they may be living, whatever political or social positions they may hold, whatever opinions and beliefs they may happen to have. Love is what defines a believer and sometimes modeling it may not include talking points at all.

Julie Neils is the Senior Director of Media Relations for Exodus International, the world’s largest ministry helping those conflicted by their sexuality to live a life that reflects the Christian faith.

Get Comfortably Uncomfortable

✘ The desire for comfort has created much of life as we know it. Air conditioners were invented to keep us cool during hot seasons. Roofs were installed to shelter us from rain, snow and insects. Electricity is used for many purposes

including the provision of light in the midst of darkness. Commercials for new automobiles tout the latest amenities that you supposedly cannot live without. Although the desire for comfort may be one of life's priorities, comfort can also be a hindrance to achieving your goals.

T. Harv Eker, president of Peak Potentials Training went from zero to a millionaire in only two and a half years. He says: "the only time you are actually growing is when you are uncomfortable." Being comfortable may give you warm fuzzy feelings. Yet, these feelings do not usually cause you to grow. Successful people have learned how to live by becoming comfortable in the uncomfortable zone. The desire for comfort causes you to shrink back from your fears. The need for comfort keeps you from developing new relationships. You can see from these statements that comfort can be your enemy.

The next time you are uncomfortable, congratulate yourself. Say to yourself, *I must really be growing*. Now embrace those uncomfortable feelings. You have just entered your new season of being comfortable in being uncomfortable.

Former Computer Exec Says Internet Revolutionizing Evangelism

✘ A former executive for one of the world's largest computer companies says the World Wide Web is revolutionizing evangelism.

"This is the Internet moment in human history," said Walt Wilson, a former Apple Computer executive and one-time senior

vice president at Computer Sciences Corp., a \$16 billion company with 600 offices worldwide. "We have the technology to reach every man, woman and child on the Earth. We're the first generation in all human history to have this capacity."

Wilson, founder of Global Media Outreach (GMO), partnered with Campus Crusade for Christ in 2004 to create one-page Web sites that present the gospel using the Four Spiritual Laws evangelistic resource.

Today, Wilson says GMO has more than 100 Web sites, including five dedicated to the U.S. military. The sites receive at least 7 million visitors monthly from every nation on the globe, with at least 1 million people reporting decisions for Christ each month since June.

Through partnerships with churches nationwide, GMO has mobilized some 3,600 "online missionaries" to respond to questions and comments posted at the sites. The missionaries share personal stories, Scriptures and prayers.

"The people who come to us are in desperate need," Wilson said. "They're not people who want to argue with God or stick their finger at His eye. They're people in desperate need saying: 'I need help. Tell me about Jesus.'"

Difficult theological questions are referred to a team of pastors. But Wilson said too many Christians think they have to be theologians to share their faith. "Just tell them your story," he says. "Life is about stories."

Wilson said a grandmother in South Carolina shared Christ with a Muslim in the Middle East who told her he couldn't stand the violence any longer. A stay-at-home mom evangelized while baking cookies. Residents in retirement homes minister to people in Pakistan and Tora Bora.

In a statement, North Point Baptist Church in Phoenix said that after working with GMO for four years, its missionaries

saw 14,000 people report decisions for Christ. Forestville Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., has mobilized roughly 70 online missionaries who minister worldwide every day.

“Forestville families minister together, reaching out from their home computers, to the world that Jesus loves and died people who are hungry and seeking Jesus,” senior pastor Rob Jackson said. “I truly believe that technology through computers and cell phones (and who knows what will come next) is the ‘front porch,’ and the main and most effective entry point and communication port, to the people of this 21st century world.”

Wilson developed the idea for GMO more than 15 years ago while meeting with business leaders and professors at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

While the group was discussing ways to monetize a new thing called the Internet, Wilson says God began to speak to him through a series of questions. He began to see the Internet as one of the most significant ministry tools in centuries-not unlike Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press, which made the Bible more accessible, and the ancient Roman roads that ultimately helped spread the gospel across Europe.

“We believe God is doing something very dramatic in these late days, and we believe everybody’s going to have an opportunity to know Jesus,” Wilson said. “Nobody will be able to say I didn’t know. ... We can reach the world.”

The Frame of Faith

Hebrews 11:1-16 We recently purchased some beautiful oil paintings painted by some Israeli art students. These students

were temporarily in the United States selling their paintings to earn money for their art school in Jerusalem. They went door to door and also had a few shows in the U.S. The paintings were not framed, but we had the promise of these students that a fellow student would call us who could give us a good price on framing the pictures for us. We waited and waited for this call. Meanwhile our beautiful pictures were gathering dust while they were stored under our bed. No one knew we had such beautiful paintings because they were not framed yet and we could not display them on our walls.


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Effective Discipleship

Find helpful discipleship tips.

-  **Practice spiritual disciplines.** Read the bible daily, confess and repent of your sins and pray for the lost. Your relationship with Christ is a priority and the key to effectively discipling others.
- **Remain conservative in your ethics.** Remember that pride can be dangerous. Pride may imply that you are judging others falsely, and is said to be the mother of all sins, because pride resides in each one of us.
- **Lead by example.** “Do as I say, not as I do” is not an effective way to disciple someone. Make sure your life is worthy of emulating.

Do-It-Yourself Gift Ideas

The current economic situation has affected every area of our lives, including our elaborate Christmas budgets. Find creative, sentimental and inexpensive do-it-yourself gift ideas. Sometimes the best gifts cost only a little time.

- **Create a recipe booklet** with a collection of all your favorite homemade recipes that have been passed down for generations. [Click here for instructions.](#)

- **Make homemade Christmas ornaments** that can be used on Christmas trees year after year. Click here to find different designs and instructions on how to make your own ornaments.
- **Make homemade jam and jelly** and put them in decorative jars for a nice gift. Click here for holiday recipes.
- **Homemade magnets** are a great gift idea for a teacher, friend, neighbor or a family member and they are so simple to make. Click here for instructions on how to create your own Christmas magnets.
- **Bake some homemade cookies** and package them in a creative and festive way. Click here for ideas.
- **Gel candles** are very popular and a great gift idea. Click here for instructions so you can make your own.
- Make a Christmas gift basket. Click here for ideas for making your own gift baskets on various Christmas themes.
- **Play dough** is a great gift idea for children. You can even make the dough in holiday colors and add Christmas cookie dough cutters for a more festive arrangement. Click here on recipes for play dough and an instructional video.
- **Gift an 'Herb Garden'**. Grow various herbs like Thyme, Rosemary and Basil in small pots. Place these pots in a long plastic flat-bottomed basket or a clay pot and give it to someone that loves to cook. Click here for instructions on how to plant your herb garden.
- **Make a homemade Christmas wreath** that they can hang on their door or as home décor. Click here for instructions on how to make a traditional Christmas wreath.

Breaking Free From the Spirit of Control

Here are six ways to identify an unhealthy leadership style in a church or ministry.

My world was shaken 20 years ago this week. On Nov. 10, 1989, one day after German protesters tore down the Berlin Wall, a Christian ministry I had been a part of for 11 years also fell apart.

Maranatha Campus Ministries was a vibrant outreach to college campuses. It was founded in Kentucky during the Jesus movement by a passionate charismatic couple, Bob and Rose Weiner, who eventually started churches on more than 50 American universities. In its heyday in the Reagan era, students from Maranatha took the gospel around the world.